

What Are Conservatoires For?

Discourses of Purpose in the Contemporary Conservatoire

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I declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is my own. The thesis is 79,180 words, excluding bibliography and appendix.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of a modern day UK conservatoire. In the context of recent debates on the purpose of higher education, I look at how discourses of purpose are constructed, confirmed and contested in the contemporary conservatoire. The analytical strategies I use to construct my research account follow a Foucauldian conception of discourse, an approach which allows me to combine historical and contemporary material to develop categories of discourse.

By historical account, I show how the conservatoire model founded at the start of the nineteenth century embodies an institutionalisation of the discourse of classical music. Using interview texts and institutional literature gathered from my empirical setting, I identify continuities with the discourse of classical music in the contemporary conservatoire, concluding that the student is produced as a performer and interpreter of canonical works. I find the discourse of classical music challenged by more recent discourses on higher education, particularly that of higher education for employability and higher education for personal development. I argue that an over-reliance on these discourses produces a limiting approach to music in higher education by promoting technical and transferable skills over a critical and creative engagement with music. I advocate a return to practices which support discourses of new music and anti-specialism, which challenge the performer as reverent interpreter and allow for engagement with a greater range of repertoire, new interpretative pathways, improvisation and composition. In doing so, the conservatoire could better fulfil its claim to being part of an education which is both musical and 'higher'.

I locate my research within the field of higher education studies, and my research forms an original contribution to the sociology of music in higher education, a lesser-used disciplinary approach to a newly burgeoning field.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is a study of the modern day UK conservatoire, a higher education institution that teaches music primarily to students enrolled at undergraduate and post-graduate levels. My contribution to original research lies in the field of music education, more specifically music in higher education, and though my outlook is sociological, I also draw on concepts from the philosophy of higher education and relevant texts on aesthetics and history from the musicology literature. Using a social constructivist conceptual framework, I take a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis to identify discourses of purpose in the conservatoire, looking at how these discourses are constructed, confirmed and contested and the effects they have on conservatoire practices and conservatoire students.

In this chapter, I explain how I came to select my research topic and how it contributes to the field of music education. I introduce my research design in the context of my methodological and theoretical presuppositions and outline how this shapes my research methods. My research focus is informed by my discourse analysis approach and is stated before I present an outline of the thesis.

1.2 The conservatoire context

There are over 300 conservatoires in the world today.¹ Though specialist secular music schools have existed since the Italian *conservatorio* of the fifteenth century, their function has fluctuated between teaching music for vocational training or pleasure, to students of different ages from school age children to undergraduates and beyond. Even today, the conservatoire is a slightly different institution depending on its country and context, and also goes by the name of music college (UK), conservatory or music school (US), conservatorium (Australia), or Musikhochschule (Germany). This thesis

¹ Source: conservatoires listed on <http://www.musicalchairs.info/conservatoires>. Accessed 21.07.10.

concentrates on the model of conservatoire most commonly found in the UK; the independent higher education institution which teaches practical music performance and composition to students enrolled at undergraduate and post-graduate levels.

In the UK, conservatoires have been contrasted with university music departments, with the former offering what is seen as an education in practical music making, whilst the latter offers academic study in musicology, the discipline which involves enquiry into all aspects of music apart from performing and composing, including music history, aesthetics, music theory and analysis. Whilst there are eight conservatoires in the UK, there are some one hundred institutions altogether which offer music degree programmes. This distinction is not always so clear cut, particularly in other countries; the US and Australia for example, train performers in university departments too, a legacy of conservatoires being incorporated into the university system during the twentieth century. The teaching of composition is perhaps the one area where there is an overlap between conservatoires and universities in the UK, and in recent years, university programmes have been trying to incorporate more practical music into their courses.²

In other parts of Europe, conservatoires teach music exclusively to school age children, functioning as extra-curricular centres, whilst UK conservatoires offer more specialised Saturday school tuition to children. More unusually, in Argentina there is a conservatoire which because of political reasons can only accept students on a first-come first-served basis to its undergraduate course, with the result that complete beginners find themselves on a professional training course. By contrast, UK conservatoires take in students from age 18 for undergraduate and postgraduate courses, and require them to already have undergone considerable musical training before they arrive.

In both conservatoires and universities globally, there has been an emphasis on Western classical music, though in recent years, this has changed, with jazz being

² For more information on the breadth of music degree courses in the UK, see the Music Benchmark Statement at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/honours/music.pdf>, 1-3. Accessed 20.07.10.

widely accepted into conservatoire curricula and ethnomusicology into the university. Again the context varies by institution and country, so that in Australia it is possible to enter the conservatoire to study local instruments such as the didgeridoo, whilst in the UK, smaller niche courses such as traditional folk music and musical theatre have been added to individual institutions. However, excepting the addition of jazz departments, the overall institutional emphasis of UK conservatoires remains on the Western classical music tradition.

1.3 'It seeps through the walls'

My research has grown out of my own experiences as a teacher in the conservatoire and my experiences as a performer in the music profession. An interest in the beliefs and values that students bring to their conservatoire studies stemmed from my classroom observations of my students' aspirations, namely that most students wanted to be performers: soloists, chamber musicians, or orchestral performers of classical music. Within the conservatoire setting, it was also evident that students complained about having to do certain activities, for instance, academic work, or activities organised by the professional development department designed to make students aware of the range of jobs involving music that could also be available to them. Whilst expressing a clear aspiration to be part of the music profession, and making a definite link between conservatoire studies and this aspiration, students seemed very selective in what they defined the music profession to be.

Thinking further about these issues, I observed that it was not just students who were articulating sets of values, but also their teachers, and aspects of the organisation of the conservatoire itself. Talking to a colleague who had been pondering similar dilemmas, he suggested that conservatoires had something 'seeping through the walls' that made people act in a certain way and adhere to certain values. Set against a government drive to put employability at the forefront of the higher education experience, it seemed that a conflict was in place between different concepts of purpose, with some supporting the concentrated study of a narrow performance specialism whilst others believed in a broader education, even though all seemed to share a concern with some sort of employability.

1.4 Reviewing the conservatoire; what is missing?

Taking my casual observations further into reviewing the literature on the conservatoire, a conspicuous lacuna on the topic became apparent; until the last decade, the conservatoire has not been a popular object of enquiry. When considering the contribution of musicology, the topic has drawn a near blank.³ At first this may seem peculiar, given that the music conservatoire is seen as the main institution which produces the performers who uphold the classical tradition which musicology comments on, however, musicology as a discipline prefers to concentrate on ‘great’ composers and their canonical works. Cook gets to the nub of the problem when he describes musicology’s attitude towards performers as ‘like servants in Victorian society; they have to be there, but you don’t have to talk about them’ (2000, 14).

Apart from two ethnomusicological studies (Kingsbury, 1988; Nettl, 1995) that take the conservatoire or university music departments respectively as their focus of research, it has been researchers of music education who have sought to address the gap. This task too has taken a long time in coming, owing to an interest in primary and secondary education in schools sparked by debate on the national curriculum to the near exclusion of higher education.⁴ Conservatoires have been put firmly on the research agenda in the last decade, owing to a mix of factors; government pressure to link higher education to employability, funding linked to conservatoires being able to demonstrate themselves as research institutions, concern that conservatoires perform an elitist function in privileging certain musical repertoires and practices, and action research by teacher-researchers wishing to reflect on their own practice.

Through engaging with these numerous texts, it seemed to me that there was a problem that had still not been addressed; namely, what are conservatoires for? Most texts articulated that conservatoires currently perform or *should* perform a particular function, for instance, training students to play a particular repertoire or equipping

³ The handful of musicological offerings appear to be Poole (1997) and Leonard (2007) for historical studies of two specific institutions in France, and various comments in Taruskin (for instance, 2009, 5-6; 2005, vol 3, 288; 1995, 170).

⁴ Witness the detailed discussion of approaches to music curricula in secondary education in Cox, 2002. There is no equivalent account for music in higher education.

students with skills for an array of music related jobs, and then, armed with these aims proceeded to explore how this may be best brought about. My project is different in that it aims to describe how ideas of purpose held by individuals or articulated in conservatoire practices are brought about. What has to hold for the conservatoire to be given a particular purpose? How is such a sense of purpose maintained? How are competing aims, beliefs and values suppressed or marginalised? What is it that is seeping through the walls and how did it get there?

1.5 Preliminary remarks on researching the conservatoire

To explore these questions, I have designed an empirical study which uses methods of qualitative research with a Foucauldian inspired discourse analytical strategy. Since my research interest was sparked by students, my data includes interviews of 16 students at the conservatoire in which I teach. Acknowledging that students do not exist in a vacuum and wishing to gain insight into the wider context of discourses which circulate in the conservatoire, I have also interviewed 13 teachers at the same institution and have drawn upon a wide range of documentary material. These include conservatoire literature, historical accounts of conservatoires, literature relating to the teaching of music and the education of the professional musician and documents relevant to higher education. In an attempt to show the historical contingency of modern day practices often thought to be based on common sense or universal values, I also draw on the musicology literature on music history and nineteenth century aesthetics.

1.6 Preliminary remarks on discourse analysis

I have chosen a Foucauldian-inspired conception of discourse analysis (Foucault, 1972) for this research as it affords a productive approach to my empirical field. Even though Foucault himself did not use interviews as a method of gathering data, bringing his discourse analysis to bear on my interview data is an established approach to social science research (see for instance Fairclough, 2003). Furthermore, Foucault's discourse analysis allows me to take into account historical material in the determining of my discourse categories, a particularly apt approach to my empirical field given the historical nature of classical music. Using a Foucauldian approach to interview data

also allows for treatment of the data not as isolated expressions of an individual, but as texts situated within a network of concepts and practices operating in society.

1.7 Research focus

My research account is influenced by a discourse analysis approach in that I do not aim to focus on what kind of aims and values are held by individuals in the conservatoire or are articulated by the institution, or even why they are there, but at observing *how* these positions are formed and held in place and why others are not there instead (see Andersen, 2003, 8-16). To this end, my general area of enquiry aims to look at discourses of purpose which circulate in today's music conservatoire and the means by which they are constructed, confirmed and contested. I am interested not so much in interpreting the content of my data as representative of my empirical setting as looking at the conditions which must prevail for certain discourses to exist. Data is of interest primarily for its performative function in constructing, confirming and contesting discourse rather than its content.

1.8 Outline of thesis

Chapter 2 aims to articulate the theoretical field by situating the conservatoire within the literature on the purpose of higher education and the literature on applied and performing arts. In chapter 3, I articulate the problems facing me as a researcher researching the modern world and my own institution which lead me to adopt my particular theoretical approach. I go on to outline the conceptual theory which underpins my use of the term 'discourse', and how discourse analysis can be applied to both historical sources and interview texts. Chapter 4 discusses the methodological considerations of data collection, particularly with respect to positioning myself as researcher in my own institution and to gathering interview data. Data analysis forms the substance of chapters 5, 6 and 7, and each chapter builds on the findings of the preceding one. Whilst chapter 5 uses historical sources to show that the conservatoire was formed as an institutionalisation of the discourse of classical music, chapter 6 looks for instances of the discourse of classical music in my empirical setting by looking in institutional texts and interview data. Using the same sources, chapter 7 focuses on

discourses of higher education for employability and higher education for personal development, identifying these as counterdiscourses to the discourse of classical music. Chapter 8 summarises my research findings and exits the research mode to bring my findings into dialogue with the theoretical field outlined in my literature review, modelling the effects of the discourses of purpose identified and described in my thesis according to the theoretical conceptions of purpose outlined in the literature review. This attempts to show both the ramifications of my research findings in contemporary conservatoire contexts and offers a potential way of using the outcomes of my research to think about the future directions that conservatoire education can take.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to locate my research interests within existing debates on the purpose of higher education in an attempt to define the theoretical field, made up of theoretical perspectives and empirical findings which constitute the problematic of my research (Brown and Dowling, 2010, 19). I begin with literature directed at higher education as a whole, taking in arguments concerning universities and vocational and professional education, and move on to compare similar debates which have been conducted with respect to the education and training of practitioners in the applied and performing arts. Where arguments are applicable to the UK context, I have also drawn upon literature from around the world to widen and add nuance to my empirical field.

The employability agenda has dominated higher education in recent years and after summarising its main arguments, represented in industry and government commissioned reports as well as academic writing, I look at attempts to reclaim an autonomous vision of higher education. These centre on a notion that the university is based on a founding idea which must be maintained for the institution to retain its value. I address vocational and professional education through debates on the relationship between theory and practice in the curriculum, which remain relevant also to the university owing to the vocationalisation of the university system. How higher education might fulfil its many conflicting senses of purpose is predominantly addressed in the philosophy of education literature, particularly the writings of Barnett (1990, 1997, 2007; Barnett and Coate, 2005). In the second part of the chapter, I review the arguments relating to applied and performing arts education, including conservatoire education, to compare the similarities with conceptions of purpose in mainstream higher education, and to bring out an idea of the specific set of factors which differentiate the debates for practical arts education.

Further literature will also be discussed in later chapters of this thesis, in chapter 3 to explain my theoretical approach and its antecedents, chapter 4 relating to my methodology, and in subsequent chapters to compare my own research findings with that of existing research.

2.2 Conceptions of purpose in higher education

A sense of crisis

Writing in 1990, Barnett asks of higher education ‘what is it all about?’ (1990, ix). He offers a conceptual approach which looks at notions of what higher education should be for, rather than the role it already appears to be fulfilling. In doing so, he aims to ‘recover our hidden understandings of the term and to show what it would mean for our aims and practices if we were to take “higher education” seriously’ (ibid). His opening up of a space between the conceptual and the empirical, what should or might happen rather than what is happening, points to a dissatisfaction with the direction that higher education has taken in recent years.

Barnett talks of higher education in terms of crisis like many others around the world (for instance, Berube and Nelson, 1995 on America; Ash, 1997 on Germany; Amuwo, 1999 on Africa). The university in crisis is so familiar a theme, one can even find examinations of the rhetoric of crisis itself (Scott, 1995, 293-304). Each depiction of crisis rests in part on concerns pertinent to national context, but the crisis of which Barnett writes is shared by most commentators; that of higher education’s underlying sense of purpose. Taking on many different roles to become the ‘multiversity’, Barnett sees higher education institutions as moving towards ‘increasing incoherence’ as they come to serve many different functions and interests (1990, 26). This sense of an unclear purpose has led to widespread dissatisfaction and criticism. Literature with titles such as *Universities Under Scrutiny* (Taylor, 1987), *The University in Ruins* (Readings, 1996), *Killing Thinking: the Death of the University* (Evans, 2004), and *The Trouble with Higher Education* (Hussey and Smith, 2010) are typical of the deep seated unease from both outside higher education and within.

2.3 The instrumentalist view: higher education for employability

One of the main sources of contention in arguments over the purpose of higher education is the extent to which it prepares students for future employment, even though the link between higher education and employment has long been around. An emerging sense of the professions in the nineteenth century, gave rise to a new type of vocational training to prepare students to practise in areas such as law, engineering or medicine (Larson, 1977, 1; Cocks and Jarausch, 1990, 9-24 with respect to Germany; Delanty, 2001;). Taking over from apprenticeships, these professional training schools are cited as inculcating their students into both the knowledge and values of a particular profession, which emphasised a 'community interest rather than ... individual self-interest' and the adherence to a common code of ethics (Barber, 1963, 669-88; see also Macdonald, 1995). These forms of professional training sat alongside university education in academic disciplines.

The idea of what we might recognise as the modern university also arose in the nineteenth century (see Readings, 1996, 63-69; Delanty, 2001, 26-43), though in Britain, only a small proportion of the population had access to higher education; the majority of universities in Britain were formed after 1960 (Delanty, 2001, 44). Prior to this, there were a limited number of subjects and access was restricted by social class (Evans, 2004, 5). The modern university was loosely linked to educating its students to be able to take up employment, particularly bureaucratic posts such as the civil service, however, there was no direct link between the subject of study and any intended job. As universities expanded to take in more students, study of the humanities in particular was conceived in terms similar to that of an American liberal education, that becoming educated in a general sense would form a preparation for participation in civic life (Barnett and Coate, 2005, 38) and professions which required graduates (Boys, 1989, 1).

Though the idea of the higher education sector as a whole leading to the training of students for a job has been present in higher education policy since the Robbins report in 1963 (Barnett and Coate, 2005, 45), Boys locates a turning point in the government

of the late 1970s which contested the view that higher education in a liberal sense was also an 'undisputed good' (Boys, 1989, 1; see also Evans, 2004, 1-28). Boys writes that previously 'flexible' and 'literate' graduates in subjects such as 'history, languages, or mathematics reached leadership positions in the departments of state, large parts of industry, commerce and the City and led the explosive expansion of such occupations as the media and marketing which formed a formidable part of economic growth in the 1950s and 1960s' (ibid). However, this assumption was later brought under scrutiny; higher education could not be expected by 'serendipity' to prepare graduates for a 'new high technology and strong enterprise economy' (ibid). Baker and Henson write; 'the notion that a degree is a 'passport to employment' has been relegated to the past Increasingly even an excellent degree in a vocational subject cannot assure a student of a graduate level job (2010, 73).'

A liberal view was replaced by an instrumental one whereby higher education was positioned as a 'service station for a revitalised market economy' (Boys, 1989, 1). The instrumentalist view of higher education is portrayed in the literature to have been advanced and prioritised by three main factors. Firstly, the government wanted to demonstrate a clear return in its financial investment in higher education by making higher education work to meet the needs of the economy. Barnett (1990) gives an historical explanation as to the government's interest in bringing about an instrumental focus to higher education. An 'exponential expansion of higher education across the western world' in the 1960s offered 'scientific, technological and military research and development, [...] an underpinning for social policy and [legitimised] the claims of emerging professions by offering a graduate entry system' (ibid, 24). He cites this very expansion of the university to cater for society's needs as giving rise to the radical student movement of the late sixties, as students interpreted these functions of the university as serving the needs of capitalism first so that their curricula amounted to a 'form of ideological repression' (ibid). Barnett sees several lasting outcomes of the expansion of higher education and the radical student movement, including the emergent realisation that there is no such thing as a neutral higher education; the purpose of higher education is necessarily ideological whether it is to serve an alternative notion of society or the interests of government or business.

Seeing that higher education didn't always conform to its intended social purpose and proved to be expensive, Barnett maintains that the government sought to 'maximize its investment' by pushing an instrumentalist conception of purpose to the fore (ibid, 25).

The second factor which can be said to have advanced the instrumentalist view of higher education was the positioning of employers as 'stakeholders' in higher education so that higher education was now obliged to meet employers' needs (Harvey, 1994, 2). The discussion of purpose of higher education and the curricula offered, was now conducted in terms of 'internal concerns' versus 'external forces'. Instead of being answerable to itself and the academics who guarded and furthered the disciplines, universities found themselves being scrutinised for what they could offer employers and industry. Higher education now became about 'industry needs' for a graduate labour supply, and multiple policy and research reports were commissioned by government bodies, business and industry to address the question of which attributes graduates needed to satisfy employers with titles such as 'What Business Expects from Higher Education' (Dillon, 1992; see also Boys, 1989; Harvey, 1994; Archer and Davison, 2008, 7). The response of employers was not encouraging, with many reported to be dissatisfied with the graduates who presented themselves for employment, leading to the concept of the 'skills gap' (Harvey, 1994, 2). This focus on employers' needs brought on the conception of students primarily in terms of their 'employability' (Yorke, 2004). Questions were also raised as to what employers hoped to gain by employing graduates as opposed to non-graduates (Harvey, 1994, 15-18). In turn, students were expected as an outcome of their degrees to gain entry to 'graduate jobs' (Yorke, 2004, 5), defined by Elias and Purcell as that which 'tends to require some combination of expertise deriving from higher education, and the ability to demonstrate strategic/managerial skills or high level interactive skills' (2004, 9).

The third factor that can be seen to have brought an urgency to the instrumentalist view was the prediction that the nature of work and the economy would be different in the future so that higher education must change too (see Grubb, 2008, 105-129). Dissatisfaction with higher education was thus positioned as being fuelled by the

changing world of work so that the hope that graduates would become employable through the pursuit of scholarship for its own sake would no longer suffice. The 'rapidly changing – and often disappearing – workplace' became a cause for concern (for instance, Murphy, 1997), but even where jobs were deemed to be secure, these were seen to be changing too.

Phrases such as 'new high technology and strong enterprise economy' (cited above, Boys, 1989, 1) and 'knowledge economy', contributed to the argument that the nature of work and society was changing. In a document sponsored by various government departments, the BBC, and other industry partners such as Microsoft, the knowledge economy is said to affect all sectors and types of jobs, 'from agriculture and retailing to software and biotechnology' (Leadbeater cited in Brinkley, 2006, 4). The underlying premise is that 'economic success is increasingly based upon the effective utilisation of intangible assets such as knowledge, skills and innovative potential as the key resource for competitive advantage. The term "knowledge economy" is used to describe this emerging economic structure' (ESRC cited in *ibid*). Higher education is positioned as the natural institution to provide for this new future, with a prediction that 'knowledge workers' will make up to 45% of the working population in the UK by 2014. However, the report also admits that a knowledge worker is difficult to define, but suggests that the 'manufacturing, service, financial and creative industries' (*ibid*, 16) would be made up of such people.

Whilst the knowledge worker may evade unambiguous description, attempts have been made to put an exact figure on the economic benefits of higher education. This has been measured to reveal benefits to both private individuals and society. Parental and student contributions to higher education are compared with the amount graduates earn once in employment to show that in the UK, graduates make a clear economic gain, earning more than non-graduates, even when adjustments are made for a whole host of factors including ability at age seven, family and social background and school type (Blundell, Dearden, Goodman et al, 1997, 96). The effect of post graduate degrees, however, is negligible (*ibid*). Attempts have also been made to measure the amount of money the state puts into higher education against economic

gain. Fears of over-investment stem from the idea that excessive government subsidy and an oversubscribed higher education add up to too little return (Becker and Lewis, 1993). However, both Blundell et al and Becker and Lewis also attempt to make a case for the 'added' benefits to society that graduates contribute, such as being better informed citizens who are 'more cultured, more adaptable to change' (ibid, 3). Becker and Lewis go on to say 'at least conceptually, the value of the added benefits plus the value of the private benefit to define the social return to education. But there is no general agreement on what are the added benefits of education and how to measure them' (ibid; see also Bowers and Harvey, 2004).

This is not the only difficulty of measurement in an instrumental view of higher education. Though a relationship has been set up between higher education and the supply of graduates to meet the demands of employers, problems have been encountered repeatedly when predictions are made to determine how many workers will be needed. The difficulty of defining a 'knowledge worker' has been compounded by reports that 'estimations of manpower requirements' are 'not altogether successful' owing to difficulties employers have in articulating the exact nature of skills shortages. Harvey notes that often these predictions 'are subject to rapid change' (1994, 2). Furthermore, employer complaints of skills shortages amongst graduates in industries such as engineering do not square with employee complaints of poor working conditions, status and pay (Canon cited in Harvey, 1994, 2). Fears of 'overskilling' caused by too many graduates in a saturated market also make the issue of supply and demand less straightforward (CIHE, 2003, 14-22; Bowers and Harvey, 2004).

Despite these difficulties, the instrumentalist view has defined debate as to the purpose of higher education in recent decades, with Barnett referring to it as 'not so much a particular view as a general perspective' (1990, 4). With employment utility in mind, applied science, professional and business related degrees have had fewer problems justifying their existence than humanities degrees, despite the latter being generally cheaper to provide (Parker, 2001, 21-43). The instrumentalist view has had repercussions on how the curriculum is talked about too. Barnett and Coate (2005) and

Hyland (2008, 180) point out that where discussion of curriculum once occurred in terms of the knowledge area that was to be studied, this has now been replaced largely by a curriculum conceived in the language of 'skills', thus situating disciplinary knowledge and employment skills in conflict. It is striking that when employers are surveyed as to what they expect of university graduates, any kind of disciplinary knowledge is low down on the list, though Yorke (2004, 4) makes an exception for industries such as computing where specialist knowledge is necessary. Emphasising the irrelevance of university learnt knowledge, the *Employer Satisfaction* survey (Harvey, 1994, 21) lists 'specialist factual knowledge' and 'knowledge of social/political issues', as ranked 59 and 60 in a list of 62 'attributes'. When asked to justify their reasons in qualitative interviews, the employers consulted for the survey cited in-house training programmes and the speed at which knowledge becomes outmoded, even in technology based sectors, as the principal reasons for this view (ibid, 20-22). Instead, the majority of employers are said to want graduates who have a range of non-subject specific skills, also called generic, or transferable skills; a survey by the Council for Industry and Higher Education listed the following 'top 10' skills and capabilities that they considered important in prospective graduate recruits: communication skills, team working skills, integrity, intellectual ability, confidence, character/ personality, planning and organisational skills, literacy (good writing skills), numeracy (good with numbers), analysis and decision-making skills (Archer and Davison, 2008, 7). That 'social skills and personality type' are seen as more important than degree qualification is a finding repeated in many other surveys (ibid).

This may seem to point towards a paradox that universities should be responsible for actively inculcating students with a range of skills, capacities and personality traits that have little to do with the subject matter of the degree course, however, there has been little resistance to this view amongst those who promote 'employability'. Though academics in universities are portrayed as being sceptical (Baker and Henson, 2010), the general consensus is that higher education can 'simultaneously provide skills and attitudes relevant to employment and foster the personal development of students' (Boys, 1989, 16). In such a statement, there is no mention of disciplinary knowledge and this is absent from suggestions on how to improve higher education to deliver

employability. Instead, suggestions to ensure 'degree programmes and the overall student learning experience meets the needs of business' (Archer and Davidson, 2008, 13) include 'involv[ing] employers on a partnership basis at all stages of course development and subsequent monitoring rather than seeking *post hoc* reactions to course provision', 'us[ing] employer views to help improve the total student learning experience..., provid[ing] opportunities for students to develop a variety of communication skills, integrat[ing] transferable skills into the curriculum, assess[ing] skills as well as knowledge in an overt way, so that students are aware of the attributes that are being developed...' (Harvey, 1994, 75-76).

Questioning employability

There are two main strands of criticism associated with the view of higher education for employability. One set of arguments accepts the legitimacy of the instrumentalist view, its value and public good assumed, but worries as to how best to bring it about; the second, rejects the whole concept on the grounds that it represents a fundamental betrayal of the founding idea of the university.

Articles and books abound which seek to evaluate the extent to which employability and skills are being taught in higher education and then offer recommendations for their improved delivery (for instance, Drummond, Nixon and Wiltshire 1998; Fallows and Steven, 2000; Atlay and Harris, 2000; Holmes and Miller, 2000; Roodhouse, 2004; Rae, 2007; King, 2009; Baker and Henson, 2010). According to Sewell and Pool, a clearer definition of the term 'employability' itself, as distinct from 'entrepreneurship' and 'enterprise' would enable the transition 'from conceptual ambiguity to operational clarity' (2010, 89; also Knight and Yorke, 2003; Yorke, 2004). Rejecting the notion that employability is just about getting a vocational degree or doing work experience, Yorke's expanded definition reads as:

a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (2004, 7).

Higher education is still justified in terms of external demands even if definitions are shifted; the problem remains how best to cater to them.

What Yorke's revised definition of employability does achieve, however, is a move away from seeing higher education as a simple accruing of skills (see also Bowers and Harvey, 2004). West (2000) too takes issue with the attempt to impart employability skills for generalised employability outcomes, instead advocating that education is tailored towards specific professions. He believes that this will circumvent the 'academic-vocational' divide particularly if students who have specialized in a particular profession are given preferential access to that profession, rather like the now outmoded apprenticeship system.

By looking at existing empirical studies which attempt to measure the success of schemes to embed generic employability skills throughout a range of disciplines, Cranmer (2006) finds a failure of such schemes to have an overt effect on graduate abilities to gain employment after graduation. For Cranmer, the 'complexities inherent in the employability agenda ... consistently undermine attempts to understand how best to develop employability skills in universities' (ibid, 174). Like West, she challenges the notion that employability skills should be taught not just in courses which address specific professions, but through all higher education courses. Instead, she finds evidence to suggest that students' difficulty in finding employment arises not because of a failure to gain skills during undergraduate courses, but at the point of transition between higher education and employment. She concludes:

it would surely make sense for universities to redirect some of their resources from classroom-based initiatives seeking to develop employability skills to increasing employment-based training and experience, and/or employer involvement in courses, which were found to positively affect immediate graduate prospects in the labour market and, therefore, support graduates in the transitional stage into employment (ibid; see also, Mason, Williams and Cranmer 2009).

Work based learning which simulates the working environment in higher education and work experience which sends students out on professional placements as part of the degree course has been seen as a solution to the difficulty of supplying students with employment skills (Boud and Solomon, 2001; Moreland, 2005; Hyland, 2008, 129-

142;). This incorporates criticisms that skills learnt in the context of the university can only be brought into the workplace with varying degrees of success as they have to be recontextualised to suit the new situation. Cranmer (2006) notes that students of applied engineering can perhaps transfer problems from the classroom to an engineering work environment with relative ease, whereas history students destined for a wider range of unspecified employment outcomes may not be faced with the same type of problems in their future work. Whilst acknowledging the sometimes tenuous link between study and work, Moreland differs from Cranmer in concluding that 'all subjects have the potential to benefit from work experiences within their programmes of study' (2005, 5). This he attributes to 'higher order metacognitive skills' (ibid, 3) that work related learning can bring, which include elements such as judgement and self-knowledge. Baker and Henson go further by asserting that disciplines which are concerned with 'traditional academic values' should not be treated any differently from more vocational courses because 'disciplinary academic development and key skills development are both subsets of employability' (2010, 64; see also Caley, 2001, 113-125).

2.4 Defending higher education

Higher education, the state and society

There are those who would argue that employability is a by-product, if not a subset of disciplinary academic development and vigorously criticise the notion that higher education primarily should be made to address the nation's employment needs (Gibbs, 2000). This set of arguments goes further than criticism of the delivery of the employability/skills agenda by attacking the very idea of the instrumentalist view of higher education. It is argued that the 'central legitimating idea of higher education' (Morley, 2001, 131) based on an historical idea, is now being corrupted, though in the literature which I detail below, several core ideas present themselves, depending on historical and geographical context. The instrumentalist view is seen as breaking with the idea of higher education as a social institution, and instead higher education is framed as an industry (Gumpert, 2000). Morley cites corporate interests and the

‘mediation and management of government policy’ as corrupting the ‘academy’ and as a result, the ‘values of the consumer society are now embedded in educational relationships’, its language, and its priorities (2001, 131). Morley offers a typical view of those concerned that higher education for employability represents the commodification of education whilst, Evans complains that ‘independent thought and critical values’ have been eroded by ‘the small minded master’ of the ‘rational bureaucratic state’ (2004, 3).

One of the concepts from earlier times that the commodified and constrained present is seen to encroach upon and replace, is the foundational idea of higher education from the nineteenth century, that the university was ‘shaped around the modern nation state’ (Delanty, 2001, 35). Readings (1996) charts Kant’s idea of reason and later, Humboldt’s idea of culture as the principal rationale for the foundation of the university. Though Kant believed that through the faculties (e.g. medicine, law, theology, philosophy) the university should educate those destined to work for the state, the pursuit of reason would keep in check any dominance of either party (ibid, 58). These ideas were taken up by German idealist philosophers, with Schiller advocating an aesthetic education as an answer to a perceived problematic split between reason and nature (ibid, 63); the humanities and the historical study of culture, particularly the idea of a national literature, came to the fore. With Humboldt, teaching and research, which had previously been separate activities were combined, and the university was to play a spiritual role in the formation of the nation, substituting culture and reason for religion (Delanty, 2001, 33). Knowledge could be studied in and of itself and was an emancipatory force (see also Barnett, 1990, 119). As such, the autonomy of the university should be protected by the state; its professors were characterised by Fichte as ‘interpreters’ of the nation’ (Delanty, 2001, 34). As a result, ‘with the decline of Latin as a common language and the rise of the vernacular, the university was crucial in promoting national languages and in codifying national literatures and geography’ (ibid, 35). With the university tied so strongly to the projection of nation and state, there were inevitable national variations; whereas in Germany the emphasis was on the building of an idea of nationhood, Delanty writes that in France the emphasis was on the university as state forming, particularly the

notion of the centralist state (ibid, 34). America, by contrast concentrated on a notion of citizenship in its universities and training for the professions; its project was to make a new nation based on civil society rather than national culture (ibid).

Both Delanty and Readings see the current 'crisis' in contemporary higher education as indicative of a crisis of the nation state and citizenship in the contemporary world, for which Readings sees the rise of the modern transnational corporation, possessing wealth and power which eclipses that of the nation state, as culpable. Universities, in now serving globalization, not the nation state, have become transnational corporations in themselves with students as consumers. The internationalisation of the university has resulted in 'the rupture of any such a link between a given university and the society that surrounds it' (Readings, 1996, 180). This is a pessimistic diagnosis which sees the modern university as bereft of a reason for existence, as it has outlived its historical purpose. Delanty, by contrast, is more optimistic in finding the university 'a site of conflicts' rather than 'in ruins' (2001, 141), in need of redefinition but replete with possibilities for future reconfiguration and renewal.

From these historical accounts, it becomes apparent that higher education has always had a relationship to society and the state. That it is described on such a macro and abstract level perhaps explains the tendency of advocates of the instrumental approach to higher education to use terminology such as 'ivory tower' or to urge on the part of academics for 'more societal concern with what a college degree consists of' (Karabell, 1998). The instrumentalists characterise higher education without an obvious vocational purpose as separated from society and the state, an indulgent luxury. This is countered by those who see the very independence of higher education as vital to the integrity of the enterprise. However, Barnett characterises both poles of the argument as 'mistaken' (1990, 77). He says:

higher education is, as a social fact, incorporated into the modern state. The question ... is: what ought we to do to see that higher education fulfils its emancipatory promise, so that it does more than providing qualified manpower for the state, and acting as a cultural finishing school?' (ibid, 78).

Epistemological attack

Before looking at how Barnett and others attempt to answer this question, there is one further area of contention at the core of the higher education project which needs an exposition. The pursuit of knowledge so integral to the idea of higher education has been undermined by twentieth century epistemological developments. The eroding of the authority of the disciplines of each academic subject area through a questioning of concepts such as objectivity and truth which underpinned the pursuit of knowledge in the past (Barnett, 1990, 47), has been seen as an attack on the academy from within the academy. In the humanities in particular, the proliferation of hermeneutic approaches many of which are based on identity politics and post structuralist attitudes promoting the historical contingency of truth have splintered the consensus on knowledge that was once offered by the disciplines (Guy and Small, 1993; Giroux, 1995, 238) in favour of a multitude of perspectives. Furthermore, the once revered canon at the heart of the humanities has come under attack (see Bloom, 1987, and Eagleton, 1996, 186-189 for criticisms from opposing right and left perspectives respectively).

2.5 Salvaging higher education

Though undermined from a sociological perspective with the encroachment of the state and its instrumentalist view, and from epistemological doubts on the nature of knowledge itself, many still believe that there is something in the concept of higher education that is worth preserving and striving for. Retaining something of the university's independent status in society, both Hornblow (2007) and Tasker and Packham (1990) advocate that higher education takes on a moral and ethical role acting as a 'critic and conscience of society' (Hornblow), aiming 'to understand the moral values under wealth creation and entrepreneurship' (Tasker and Packham). However, perhaps the most accommodating approach in envisaging a new future for all forms of higher education has come from those who are committed to resolving the age old battle that is implicit in the current arguments over the direction of higher

education; the distinction between theory and practice (Barnett, 1990, 75-76; Unwin, 2009, 16).

Integrating theory and practice

If instrumentalist and vocational approaches are characterised as placing undue emphasis on action and practice, then the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake has been seen as placing an exclusive emphasis on thought. The tensions this creates are felt right across the spectrum of the higher education literature, from vocational education, to professional education, to university education (Pring, 1993, 73). Whilst university study of the disciplines is criticised for being aloof from the practical world, arguments abound as to whether vocational and professional educations merely instruct or train students to perform a particular occupation leaving them with no further abilities to question or innovate in their given field. For Gibbs, after Bernstein and Gadamar, 'technical competence (whether it be in skills or ideas) falls short of wisdom' (2000, 563; see also Barnett, 1990, 75-76; Moulakis, 1994). By contrast, however, Unwin speaks up for training (2009, 15), opining that it is a necessary but undervalued component of learning a vocation. The schism between thought and practice is also revealed in debates over whether it is conceptually meaningful to separate vocational from professional educations, as all occupations, be they that of a builder or an accountant, involve drawing upon a body of knowledge and professional codes of conduct (see *ibid*, 15-16), thus minimising the difference between work which is accomplished primarily through the hands and that which results from thought. Seen thus, Unwin argues that all professional training is a subset of vocational training (*ibid*, 15).

These tensions have provoked various calls, for instance, through Dewey's writings, Ryan notes that practice can become the 'basis of a liberal education' (1999, 106), rather than a liberal education having to be thrown out in favour of practical work. Here, there is a shift from 'knowledge to knowing', where propositional knowledge is brought together with procedural knowledge. Knowing is defined as 'practice in a particular organisational context, which entails interaction with the world, something that affords both the acquisition and use of knowledge' (Unwin, 2009, 17; see also

Cook and Brown, 2005). Barnett and Coate describe the difference as 'a shift from *propositional* knowledge towards an experiential *knowing*; or a moving away from knowledge with underlying truth claims to a means of coming to know through encounters with problem-solving situations, practical tasks or other *in situ* experiences' (2005, 92). Conceived thus, both instrumentalist and epistemological undermining of higher education are reconciled.

From criticality to critical being

Barnett argues that the move from knowledge to knowing is not just about learning but developing the ability to critique that which one learns, be it propositional or procedural knowledge or the methods by which one engages in knowing (1990, 1997). In formulating his 'idea of higher education', Barnett presents the notion of 'criticality', an educational theory of higher education which he describes as 'the minimal educational conditions for an educational process to justify the title "higher education" (1990, 203). These are:

1. A deep understanding, by the student, of some knowledge claims.
2. A radical critique, by the same student, of those knowledge claims.
3. A developing competence to conduct that critique in the company of others.
4. The student's involvement in determining the shape and direction of that critique (i.e. some form of independent inquiry).
5. The student's self-reflection, with the student developing the capacity critically to evaluate his or her own achievements, knowledge claims and performance.
6. The opportunity for the student to engage in that inquiry in a process of open dialogue and cooperation (freed from unnecessary direction) (ibid).

Applicable to all forms of higher education, be it vocational, professional, or based in the disciplines, Barnett sees these criteria as addressing both the sociological and epistemological undermining of higher education in that it allows for ongoing engagement with reason and knowledge which is not incompatible with enabling action in the outside world. Criticality has been seized upon with enthusiasm by educational writers, but has also been problematised (see Johnston, 2003) when reduced to a set of 'critical thinking skills' by overly reductive policy makers, and criticised for inspiring critique from academic sidelines without any corresponding 'critical action' which could improve that which is critiqued (Phipps, 2010).

Perhaps in an attempt to pre-empt these dangers, in later writings Barnett moves from the idea of criticality to that of 'critical being' (1997). Careful to stress that being critical is not just a 'mindset' or only applicable to formal knowledge, Barnett advocates the interaction of critical reason with critical self-reflection and critical action, so 'domains' of criticality are brought to bear on knowledge, self and the world (ibid, 137). With regard to vocational and professional education, he bemoans the emphasis on action and remains sceptical as to the efficacy of remedies which attempt to redress the imbalance by bolting on chunks of theory into the curriculum. Barnett also finds Schon's 'knowledge-in-use' and 'reflexive practice' wanting, believing that professional education should not be 'reduced to problem-solving ... or reflecting critically on one's professional practice', which he believes 'plays into the hands of operationalists' by making the professional into a 'self-monitoring auto-didactic', where 'efficiency and technique become all' (ibid, 143). By contrast, Barnett's model of 'critical being' allows for 'professionals to profess fundamental critique', by the act of integrating critical thinking into the domains of knowledge, self and world thus allowing professionals to open themselves up to 'multiple discourses' which help them to be critical and 'manage the incoherence of the contemporary world' (ibid, 144).

Knowledge, Action, Being

Barnett and Coate use another tripartite schema developed from Barnett's earlier work (1997) on criticality and critical being as a framework for discussion of the curriculum in higher education, with the domains of knowledge, self and world becoming 'knowledge', 'action' and 'being' (2005, 67-107). In comparison to other discussions of curricula in higher education, it is notable that in their formulation, only the action domain is expressed in terms of skills, described as 'practical skills and know-how' (ibid, 94), and encompassing both the skills needed to engage with the knowledge domain in the degree course and those required for employability after graduation. The knowledge domain is equated with the subject areas that should be included in the curriculum, whilst 'being' refers to the potential transformative effects that education can have on students as individuals, not just what they know or what they do, but who they are as people and how they function in society. This formulation

can be seen as an attempt to establish a view of higher education which takes into account the dynamic and competing needs of academia (knowledge), the market (action) and the individual (being) without privileging or undermining any particular component (ibid, 69-72).

Barnett and Coate adjust the relative weightings of each domain to represent the content and key concerns of the curricula in the humanities, science and professional degrees. They point out that, for instance, both humanities and science degrees will typically place a greater reliance on the knowledge domain than 'action' or 'being' with curricula being driven by accrued disciplinary knowledge, whilst curricula for professional degrees will place more of an emphasis on 'action'. What is diminished in both cases, is the 'being' domain, which they describe as an unfashionable and under-acknowledged facet of contemporary higher education (ibid, 107).

The concern with higher education as enabling a type of 'being', rather than the accrual of contextual skills or knowledge, is echoed in other writings with a basis in existential philosophy. Holmes (1995), for instance, also aims to 'transcend' the liberal and instrumentalist poles of education by focusing on 'becoming a graduate, or becoming highly educated', whilst Gibbs (2000) looks to a university education to provide 'the possibilities of what the student and the tradition might become.' Development as a citizen is included in this notion of being, but perhaps more important is the promise of development of self, one which comes through grappling with complex problems. Phipps calls for higher education to be a place for 'air' (2010; see also Barnett's 'pedagogy of air', 2007), whilst Barnett adds to that with a quest for 'individual voice', 'authenticity', 'spirit', 'inspiration' and 'care' in pursuit of 'being and becoming' (2007). Employability, citizenship and personal fulfilment are meant to be catered for in this vision of higher education, though perhaps stances which promote 'being' can also be seen as a reaction or pointed protest against the language of skills, competency and other predetermined learning outcomes so prevalent in the instrumentalist view of higher education.

Summary

Throughout the conceptions of purpose of higher education which I have surveyed thus far, there is a concern that higher education should benefit society. Whether it does this by supplying skilled workers to fuel a competitive workforce in business and industry, by building the idea of the nation state through culture, by encouraging independent public critique of the state, by educating good citizens or developing fulfilled individuals, higher education is firmly situated in society. When it comes to justifying higher education's costs, however, there is disagreement as to whether higher education can have an intrinsic sense of purpose which serves society, or whether this can only be measured in terms of the earning capacity of graduates. On the one hand, external ends justify the means in the instrumentalists' employability debate. On the other, champions of higher education from within the academy advocate an intrinsic value, particularly with respect to a notion of criticality. Liberal education has been pitted against an employability agenda, though attempts have also been made to reconcile this binary divide by accommodating aspects of both in university, vocational and professional education. In more recent years, there has been a focus on students' 'being' as a way of transcending the often predictable nature of polarised arguments, by characterising higher education as a process which develops and reconciles students' internal, personal development with playing an active and fulfilling role in society.

2.6 Arts education

So what are the similarities and differences between concepts of purpose in the literature on higher education and that of applied and performing arts education? As with higher education, a notion of employability dominates the agenda of much recent research in arts education, particularly that on conservatoires. This is perhaps not a surprise, for the study of practical arts such as drama, art, dance and music has been seen along the axis of vocational/professional training, more than the humanities with its academic historical and hermeneutic approaches to artworks. Unwin's view (2009, 13; see also Winch, 1998) that training plays an important and undervalued role in

vocational education (c.f. Barnett, 1990, 1997) would also readily apply to artists learning the craft of their art. As such, one would expect Barnett and Coate's (2005) action domain to be foregrounded in the curriculum, not only as action in the world leading to employment, but as the actions required to bring about the knowledge component of learning through the performance or realization of the artwork. Though the vocational craft aspect of learning is important in the applied and performance arts, the literature on arts education does not, however, suffer from complaints that artists' work is devalued as mere manual labour (c.f. Unwin, 2009, 1-2), one suspects because of the position of respect the arts have occupied in society.

Despite similarities with arguments for employability in the literature on mainstream higher education, there are special circumstances in the arts which prevent neat comparisons being drawn, so that whilst the practical arts education literature draws upon arguments that can be found in higher education literature on employability, it also takes on a special flavour of its own. I will look at how arts professions are portrayed in the education literature, the challenges this presents to their vocational education, and how arguments on the purpose of arts education are configured.

Where there is relevant literature on the arts in general or specific arts outside music, I will also bring this into discussion to provide a comparison with literature on the conservatoire and a wider view of the context in which music education takes place.

Describing the arts professions

Supply and demand between higher education and the arts job market is seen as a major topic of contention in the literature on applied and performance arts education. Whilst many professions train more graduates than actually practise in the profession, Becker notes that the arts occupy a different league in comparison with other professions by training proportionally many more students than can be accommodated by society's need for practising artists (1982, 52). More recent literature has described a shrinking and changing profession (Rogers, 2002; Jones, 2004; Carey, 2004). Despite this, Brown reports that: 'the demand for performing arts courses at all levels is booming. Since 1996/1997 student numbers in music have risen by 37.9 per cent and in drama and dance by 45.3 per cent' (2007, 46; for similar

increases in Australia, see also Bennet, 2009, 310). As a consequence, Brown cites Leadbeater in stating that there are 55 per cent more musicians and 40 per cent more actors now working in Britain (2007, 46) compared to 1991, whilst also noting that performing arts degree courses do not appear to do well on national league tables of employability indicators.

Because of a difficulty in identifying how educational outcomes correlate with future employment, sociological research by Becker (1982) and Kingsbury (1988) has questioned whether arts education can be said to serve a notion of employability at all. Because of the uncertain relationship between education and future employment, Becker suggests that the main effect of arts education is to create knowledgeable connoisseurs (1982, 52). Becker casts this connoisseurship in a positive light, suggesting that students and graduates of arts colleges are more likely to take out memberships to arts organisations, purchase concert subscriptions and visit *avant garde* performances that the rest of the public find difficult to comprehend, thus lending important and much needed support to existing arts and new artistic achievement. Arts education serves to inculcate students into the norms and expectations of a particular art form and performs the vital job of producing knowledgeable audiences who engage critically with art. Formulated thus, the outcome of arts education is to pave the way for entry to the arts world but not necessarily the arts professions.

However, the relevance of higher education to employability has become much more urgent since Becker and Kingsbury wrote their studies. Furthermore, their studies were written more in the vein of disinterested sociological enquiry than much modern research in education which often seeks to recommend improvements to current educational practice. The realisation that there are many more trained performers than performance jobs, for instance, leads Brown to question the ethics of applied and performance arts education, when he asks whether 'there [is] a fundamental 'dishonesty' involved in training so many potential performers' (2007, 46). Brown argues that the delivery of an education which will result in employment becomes all the more acute when surveys of arts students reveal that 92% believe 'that it is

important or very important that higher education should be preparing them for the world of work' (ibid, 36).

Kingsbury, writing about the US context, asks whether conservatoires can be viewed in the same sense that law schools produce lawyers or medical schools produce doctors. Kingsbury compares formal regulation, economic reward and professional identity, concluding that though schools of law, medicine, or nursing share a specialism of focus with the conservatoire, the latter in 'its relation to the economy and the world around it is quite different from that of a professional school' (1988, 19). Whilst most professions are regulated by government licensing agencies to the extent that graduates cannot engage in professional practice until they have received a formal qualification (see also Winch and Clarke, 2003), Kingsbury points out that many music students are already performing for money by the time they arrive as undergraduates. It is not formal regulation that is required to practise in the profession, but an ability to practise to the required professional level regardless of the presence of any qualification. Becker writes of the indifference of the professional art world and, as a consequence students themselves, of the need for a formal qualification when he says 'large numbers train for careers in the arts, even more begin such training without completing it, not necessarily because they do not still desire such careers but because they believe that formal training is neither necessary nor desirable for such a career. They may be right' (1982, 52-53; see also Bennet, 2009, 310).

That teaching qualifications are not offered by conservatoires is perhaps an omission that has not been adequately explained (Watson, 2010) given the prevalence of graduates finding work as instrumental teachers (see also Mills, 2005, with regard to the resistance of conservatoire students to school music teaching; and Miller and Baker, 2007). Whilst the Tooley review into conservatoires (1998, 35) recommended that the teaching of performance teachers was 'an urgent matter' for 'national enquiry' (see also Dumbreck, Hermanns and Paisley, 2003, 42), with a 'potential leadership role for the conservatoires', this recommendation has not been taken seriously as the core business of the conservatoire has centred on performance, in accordance with HEFCE's criteria for 'premium' funding to conservatoires which states

that to receive funding the conservatoire must show that 'more than 75% of graduates are working primarily in professional music performance, as performers of music, within five years of graduating from the institution' (HEFCE, 2000, 17).

If careers in the applied and performance arts do not conform to norms in other professions because of the lack of formal regulation, they are also seen as different when it comes to monetary reward. Whilst the literature on general higher education concludes that graduates earn more than non-graduates, this link has been more uncertain in the arts (Waugh, 2000; Bridgstock, 2007). For instance, a 2004 Musicians' Union survey of British orchestral musicians' salaries found that 'despite being dedicated professionals at the top of their profession' many players earned just £22,500 pa, less than the national average at the time of survey.⁵ Similarly, a Musicians' Benevolent Fund survey of 1,888 musicians in Britain concluded that it is 'a poorly paid profession'; 'average earnings were just £16,300 ... with 37% earning less than £10,000 and 23% less than £5,000 in the previous tax year' (MBF, 2007, 4). Though neither of these surveys aim to show graduates' earnings compared to those of non-graduates, they do demonstrate that earnings are uniformly low in the profession (c.f. Office of National Statistics 2009 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, which lists a national average of around £25,000).⁶

As well as pointing to low rates of pay, a 2008 NESTA commissioned report on fine arts graduates highlights another difficulty of defining and tracking the earnings of those who work in the arts, finding that 'there are very high rates of multi-jobbing in cultural and non-cultural sectors', because of a 'need for regular work and income' cited by a third of participants (Oakley, Sperry and Pratt, 2008, 6). Work patterns which are unconventional when compared to a primary occupation with a single employer occur frequently in the arts. For instance, Brown (2007, 29) notes that freelance work is the norm in drama, dance and music, whilst phrases such as 'portfolio' career (Rogers, 2002) or 'protean' career (Bridgstock, 2005, 2007; Bennet, 2009) have emerged to

⁵ <http://www.thehubuk.com/rates-of-pay>. Accessed 26.07.10.

⁶ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=285>. Accessed 7.12.10.

describe artists who by choice or necessity earn a living through a variety of arts related projects and jobs, either simultaneously or in succession.

This has led to calls for different forms of measurement of arts careers and their rewards, with the concomitant effect of proving that vocational arts education does lead to employment. Brown (2007) has challenged whether performing arts graduates deserve to be at the bottom of employability tables which are geared towards the single occupation jobs of employees, whereas Mills' (2004a) response to researching musicians' careers has been to adopt the notion of 'subjective career'. Mills explains:

Subjective career allows one to describe oneself as a composer, for example, even if one's income comes mainly from work in a supermarket, or as an instrumental teacher, as one waits for the next commission to come in, or for a completed work to win a competition. Subjective career is determined not by how one earns the means to pay the rent, or even how one spends one's working time: it is what one feels one is. (ibid, 180)

Similarly, Oakley et al's survey of fine arts graduates found that a notion of subjective career was in operation in how their art graduate participants described themselves; whilst 40 percent of respondents had second jobs, the results showed that the majority still 'consider themselves to be artists' (2008, 5).

The use of subjective career to chart employment patterns relies on a strong notion of artistic identity on the part of artists; perhaps surprisingly for such an unregulated and fragmentary sector, identifying with being an artist seems much more stable and consistent with concepts of professional identity held by individuals in other professions (Larson, 1977, x). Kingsbury writes that the conservatoire 'is probably more appropriately compared with a seminary than with a professional school, in that the concentrated focus of conservatory training seems more an inculcation of devotion than a preparation for a career. The sense of commitment amongst conservatory students seems more personal, moral, and emotional than professional or economic' (Kingsbury, 1988, 19). Indeed, though the link between receiving monetary reward through work is a commonly made one in most professions, it seems that the aspect of being professional which is most common across the arts is that of 'being' an artist, rather than earning money through the practice of arts. This accords with Brown's

reporting of a survey for performing arts students who 'expressed high expectations of obtaining a 'graduate job', with the latter 'not necessarily defined as a job characterised by high salary, prestige, status, and job security. It is more about obtaining interesting, stimulating work, using the degree and having opportunities to be creative' (2007, 37; see also Bridgstock, 2005). It seems that the opportunity to practise a particular art is more important than the source of income.

However, the view that arts education basically serves its purpose and that graduates somehow find their way into arts work which suits them despite its fragmentary nature and low monetary reward, is seen as an equivalent argument to those who believe that any kind of higher education course will surely result in some sort of employment. Instead, those who believe in an instrumentalist purpose to higher education have sought to fundamentally shake up the nature of arts education by expanding and redefining the notion of employability in the arts and advocating curriculum changes to match, so that arts education institutions can show that they do make their students employable.

There have been two main moves in establishing the link between arts education and employability. One has been to redefine arts employment so that a whole range of jobs – not just the practice of an art – count as employment in the arts sector or creative industries (see for instance Brown, 2007 on performing arts; Rogers, 2002 and Dumbreck et al, 2003 on music; Malinauskus, 1994 on drama). The second, as with the general higher education literature on 'what employers want', is to argue that the development of generic or transferable skills should be emphasized. Furthermore, it is argued that arts education is particularly suited to developing these skills (Bridgstock, 2005, 2007; Brown, 2007; Kleiman, 2008), and as a consequence, even those not intending to be artists can benefit their future employability if they engage in the arts (Warger and Cuskaden, 1990).

However, there is an important sense in which specialist arts institutions in Britain cannot aspire to providing education which aids a variety of employment outcomes. The criteria for special funding of conservatoires stipulates that at least 75 percent of conservatoire students must be employed in performance activities within five years of

graduation. Though this is echoed in the criteria for specialist arts funding which states that 'more than 75 percent of graduates are working primarily in professional art and design, as practitioners, within five years of graduating from the institution' (HEFCE, 2000, 21), the criteria for conservatoires can be seen as being more restrictive as 'professional design' expands the employment opportunities for practising artists. But is this insistence that specialist institutions should only produce specialist practitioners reasonable outside of arguments for specialist funding? Recent reports have sought to show that there is a gap between the aspirations reflected by the content of arts curricula and the jobs people actually do. For instance, the orchestra has traditionally been the site of the full-time job for musicians, one which many conservatoire students still aspire (Corkhill, 2005). However, Rogers cites the Association of British Orchestra's estimate that 40 percent of time spent as a full-time orchestral musician now involves taking part in education work (Rogers, 2002, 7), thus challenging the notion of the job which purely involves performance.

The report by Rogers (ibid) advocates that all musicians consider a wider range of jobs within the music profession, now reframed as the music industry. These include those that do not require performance, such as music administration and sound engineering. Conservatoires are called on to offer a wider range of courses to meet these needs. A respondent to the report is cited as pointing out that the 'alternative music sector ... is primarily fuelled by an informal circuit of arts practitioners, including recording studios, community centres, churches and clubs', all of which are largely absent from any higher education training.⁷ The implication is of an untapped potential for work which is being ignored by conservatoires in their concentration on classical music, though the Musicians' Benevolent Fund survey points out that classical musicians are better paid and work more than their non classical counterparts (MBF, 2007, 4).

More recently, Bennett argues, using both quantitative and qualitative data, that there is a 'disparity between undergraduate curricula, career expectations of students and the realities of professional practice' (2009, 324-5). She attributes students' 'unrealistic' expectations of a performance career partly to the performer 'role models'

⁷ Responses to *Creating a Land with Music*, 2. <http://www.youthmusic.org.uk/news/AR/ar2.html>. Last accessed 10.12.10.

that students revere whilst 'know[ing] little of their heroes' non-performance activities' at the same time as students holding incorrect assumptions about 'the world of work' and its freelance, protean nature (ibid). However, Miller and Baker (2007) have shown that as students progress through their studies at a particular conservatoire, they become more aware of the professional opportunities available to them, moving away from purely performance aspirations. Conservatoire initiatives have also been launched which acknowledge instrumental views of higher education. For instance, conferences have been held by Birmingham Conservatoire (2002) and Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts (2007) directly on issues of 'how to make our students employable' and 'creativity and employability', and new research on employability and conservatoires has been instigated by in-house researchers or teachers (for instance, Burt, 2006, Corkhill, 2005 respectively).

Whether students manage to gain 'realistic' perceptions of what their future careers may hold through higher education or not, there is a consensus that the knowledge component of the curriculum and curriculum offerings which emphasize learning the craft of art are not enough (Jones, 2004); Dumbreck et al's 'Key skills, Training, and Education in the Music Industry' cautions that there is a 'greater focus on hard skills for career progression than in other subsectors', though they also state that 'soft skills [are] also key' (2003, 42). Because arts professionals are more likely to be self employed, the literature does not address employers' needs; instead the focus is shifted onto clients' needs (Bennett, 2009, 32), and the constant process of renewal, which is said to have to take place for an artist to be continually employable from project to project. Weller (2008) advocates skills of entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship to develop the 'whole musician' which include self-'assessment tools' such as the 'Musician's Business Assessment', whilst Bridgstock (2005), writes of fine and performing arts graduates 'finding security in ongoing employability rather than ongoing employment' by developing 'meta-competencies and career-life management skills essential to navigate the boundaryless work world'. In doing so, Bridgstock suggests that the education and subsequent career patterns of arts graduates have something to offer other non-arts professions as working patterns of the future move towards greater use of short term contracts and career uncertainty.

This shift in focus of the curriculum from learning how to practise the art and practical skills to generic skills is seen as the key to employability for arts graduates. This enables arguments such as Brown's, that 'despite the fact that performing arts courses have been listed at the lowest end of university league tables for graduate employment ... courses in dance, drama and music are generally providing excellent preparation for the demands of the creative industries' (2007, 28). By moving away from defining employability in terms of the practice of a particular art form and instead replacing it with employment in the 'creative industries', arts education can move from embarrassment to applause. However, it is worth taking a closer look at the term 'creative industries'. Favoured by government reports such as 'Creative Britain, New Talents for the New Economy' we learn that 'our creative industries have grown twice as fast as the rest of the economy in recent years, now accounting for over seven per cent of GDP' (DCMS, 2008, 4). The main thrust of the report equates creativity with innovation, and, like similar documents on skills, innovation is cast as vital to the future prosperity of the nation. If these optimistic figures don't accord with surveys on musicians' employment and earnings, it is because creative industries 'include advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and computer services, television and radio' (Ibid, 6). Though arts colleges and conservatoires might have problems showing that 75% of their graduates are primarily employed in the practical arts (unless using criteria of 'subjective career'), they have a better chance of showing that their graduates can contribute to the creative industries, thus satisfying the government's remit of 'turning talent into jobs' (ibid).

By merging concepts of artistic creativity and innovation, and claiming that these are gained through the study of the arts in higher education, arts graduates become uniquely placed to succeed in modern society. Oakley et al (2008), find that fine arts graduates have 'attitudes and skills that are conducive to innovation', such as crossing disciplinary boundaries, engaging in lifelong learning, a habit learned in art school through long hours of unstructured and solitary studio time, and in a twist to Becker's argument that art schools create primarily arts consumers, Oakley et al argue that arts graduates consume other art as inspiration for their own creative activities,

'highlight[ing] the importance of the personal consumption of culture in its further production' (2008, 5). However, it is of note that students themselves do not see their creative activities in the same light as government; 'whilst the government talks of creativity in terms of a tangible marketable and exportable product, artists themselves refer to creativity as a process and never used the term 'creative industry' (ibid). It seems that whilst government wants to harness the innovation potential of fine arts graduates for external rewards, the graduates themselves are motivated by more personal, internal rewards.

With the argument that the arts professions are offering less opportunities for practising artists (see Carey, 2004; Brown, 2007) and arts graduates being encouraged to pursue more diverse forms of employment, there is potential for the role of universities and conservatoires to converge if the practical specialist content of the curriculum is downplayed. At the very least, specialist arts institutions in Britain could be failing to meet the criteria for their premium funding if they encourage more students to find employment which does not involve a practice of the art in which they have been trained; it is a paradox that the very move designed to demonstrate that practical arts education results in employability also undermines the criteria for specialist institution funding. This dilemma is only specific to a British context and is not addressed in the arts education literature (c.f. Rogers, 2002; Brown, 2007; Bennet, 2009). However, the construction of what Carey calls the 'vocational-versus-performance' binary as the central pinnacle of debate on the purpose of applied and performing arts education (2004, 7) has echoes of the employability versus disciplinarity debate in mainstream higher education, with the practice of the art form itself portrayed as a luxury divorced from the 'real world' (see Renshaw, 1986; Carey, 2004, 2-3; Bennett, 2009).

Carey warns that the configuration of this debate along these lines has dangers in that student 'needs' are constructed by academics and management in a language the students themselves do not use or identify with. She argues that the solution advocated by "progressive" academic discourse' of making students into generic

skilled, autonomous, lifelong learners who use their creative and entrepreneurial skills to move from education to work:

does nothing to remediate – indeed may well exacerbate the problem of ‘meeting student needs’ as students realise they are falling short of this utopian vision and instead construct a narrative of failure around themselves (2004, 158).

Knowledge, action and being in arts education?

In terms of Barnett and Coate’s tripartite schema for the curriculum of ‘knowledge, action, being’, recent arts education literature can be said to advocate a foregrounding of the action domain, conceptualised as generic employability skills. The formation of debate along the vocational versus practising art axis means that the learning of the practical art becomes conceptualised as purely in the ‘knowledge’ domain, the equivalent of disciplinary knowledge in university degrees, with little use value, unless its relevance to employability can be demonstrated. Rather than being seen as the potential for ‘action’ in the world, learning a practising art is conceived in ‘ivory tower’ terms owing to its supposedly limited employment potential. Specialist courses in the applied and performing arts, it seems, are now viewed in the same light as humanities courses, subject to the same problems (tenuous social use-value if measured against employment potential), and the same remedies (the learning of generic and transferable employment skills). This is perhaps a peculiar turn of events for institutions which are conceived in terms of specialised vocational training; or perhaps as Brown points out, by promising vocational training which does not lead to employment, students are being misled and specialist arts institutions have a moral obligation to address employment as a central purpose of education.

Whilst there is critique of delivery of skills for the action domain which incorporates arguments for work-based learning into arts education (see Manning, 2007; Hager and Johnsson, 2009), and there is also criticism of the curriculum content along the lines of an epistemological undermining of classical music (for example, Renshaw, 1986), what is largely absent from the applied and performing arts education literature, however, is debate which addresses notions such as criticality, or higher thought processes within the knowledge domain, or any reference to the being domain. In contrast to

commentary on disciplines within the humanities (see, for instance, Coate, 2010), there is no sense of applied and performing arts education as higher education institution outside of its vocational purpose. This raises questions as to the nature of vocational education; if a liberal discipline-based university education can deliver educational benefits beyond employability, is it meaningful to look for such a thing in vocational education too? Can practice become the basis of a liberal education?

Similarly, the debate over the employment relevance of the curriculum and how best to deliver skills that can aid employability, sidelines equivalent debates of whether or how a practical arts based curriculum can be worthy of higher education. Examples of arguments which could represent such a debate can be found, for instance, in music; Steiner (1992) and Dolan (2005), have argued for a reinstatement of improvisation which develops students' creative practice in composition and performance studies respectively, whilst Brown (2008) has been critical of the pedagogy facilitated by one-to-one tuition in conservatoires as promoting a 'transfer of knowledge through imitation' rather than developing individuals' capacity for independent creative and critical thinking (see also Carey, 2006 and Gaunt, 2006). There are also similar arguments in fine arts, perhaps more surprisingly, as artists are taught to create their own artwork rather than interpret the work of others as many performing artists do. Belluigi argues that despite processes of assessment and feedback which claim to promote creativity and critical thinking, they in fact 'were found to unwittingly encourage reproduction' as teachers focused students' attentions on completing assessment tasks to required standards rather than risk taking and creative play (2009, 699). These voices in the literature perhaps come the closest to envisaging applied and performing arts education as opportunities to develop and extend students' 'being'.

2.7 Conclusion

My survey of the applied and performing arts education literature has shown parallels with the central concerns of purpose in higher education literature. Most common, especially in the music education literature of the last 10 years, is a preoccupation with

employability. Though there are similarities with the employability debate as it is conducted in the higher education literature, notably the drive towards equipping students with generic and transferable skills, the nature of the practical arts means that arts education has the potential to be subject to different aims and values than mainstream higher education. For instance, the literature I have discussed shows that artistic identity is valued over income generation, and graduate employment outcomes which involve practising a particular art are valued more than any other job – such as teaching – in a related arts sector.

My research will continue this work in chapter 5 by looking at the historical roots of the values that we now attach to the arts and classical music in particular. I will show how these values came to be institutionalised in the conservatoire and the concomitant effect this had on discourses of purpose surrounding conservatoire education. In chapter 6, I look closely at how the conservatoire produces and maintains the idea of the student as a performing musician, and in chapter 7, I look at how contemporary debates in mainstream higher education such as employability and enabling students' personal development have established themselves in relation to more traditional discourses of purpose in the conservatoire.

A defining feature of my work is that I do not take a preconceived idea of the purpose of the conservatoire as a starting point for investigation. Whilst much existing research starts with an idea of the purpose of higher education and proceeds to discuss how to bring it about, I aim to analyse how competing discourses of purpose are constructed, confirmed and contested within the conservatoire. This approach requires a specific conceptual outlook and offers a way to analyse the present whilst minimising bias from existing accounts. It is to an exposition of this that I now turn.

CHAPTER 3: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 aimed to situate my research within the existing debates constituting my theoretical field, whilst also declaring that I did not aim to take a preconceived idea of the purpose of the conservatoire as a starting point for my work. This chapter will address how I plan to bring this about, or as Andersen puts it; ‘how and by which analytical strategies can we obtain knowledge critically different from the already established system of meaning?’ (2003, xi). As part of making clear how I arrive at my choice of theory, I will articulate a set of problems which I have encountered in thinking about my topic and finding an adequate vantage point from which to launch my investigations. These questions surface firstly, in researching the contemporary world in general (ibid, xxii) and secondly, in writing about the field in which I work.

The second part of this chapter is devoted to explaining the analytical strategies used in this thesis which all have a foundation in a Foucauldian concept of discourse analysis. As Mills notes ‘discourse has perhaps the widest range of possible significations of any term in literary and cultural theory and yet it is often the term within theoretical texts which is least defined’ (2004b, 139, 3); a thesis within the field of education which proceeds by discourse analysis is doubly in need of a clear explanation given the range of social science research methodologies which rely on various notions of discourse. After outlining Foucault’s conception of discourse, I discuss my use of a hybrid approach which combines a discourse analysis of historical data and interview data, and the rationale behind its use. Though the focus will be primarily theoretical, the discussion will necessarily involve elements of the empirical, as my theoretical concepts are recruited according to the specific needs of my empirical field, not imported whole as a comprehensive theory to be laid on top of any given empirical situation.

3.2 Problems of finding a theoretical vantage point

Andersen articulates the problem of finding a vantage point from where to launch inquiry into the contemporary social world thus:

it is easy to become a victim of current self-descriptions and future images in society. Instead of grasping the changes you become a prisoner of the discourse producers of the day and their strategically constructed future images. It is easy to confuse the actual changes with the images and, in doing so, one may become an instrument in confirming the discourse producers' political predictions of trends [...]. Studying change, it is essentially difficult to maintain the necessary distance to the object; to the society that should be studied. (2003, v)

When researching my literature review, part of the problem of navigating the employability debate in higher education was that research and policy documents were often commissioned or written by those with a vested interest in the results. For instance, Harvey's (1994) survey on *Employer Satisfaction* was supported by ESSO, whilst Brinkley's (2006) *Defining the Knowledge Economy* comes with a logo from the 'Work Foundation' on its cover, and sponsors are listed from a range of state and industry interests including three government departments, a regional development agency, the BBC, Microsoft, one of the world's largest auditing firms, a major pharmaceutical company, a car manufacturer and an energy company. It is perhaps no great surprise that these reports are strong advocates of the instrumentalist view of higher education. Though this does not make these documents any less interesting or relevant than those emanating as research from university departments, which also can be motivated by personal, social and political motives of the writers, their lines of reasoning and vested interest are often less overt or open to self-scrutiny.

Applied and performing arts education institutions are now strategically constructed, with strategic goals and plans, and they too are now producers of research. Finding the necessary distance from which to launch a critical take on the object of research can be difficult from one's own vantage point in the profession as various documents familiar in the course of professional life now become source materials for research, meaning they have to be re-evaluated and scrutinised in the light of who is writing and why. For instance, the Higher Education Academy funded organisation 'PALATINE', a

government funded 'subject centre for drama, dance and music', lists on its 'Project/Research Publications' web page 'entrepreneurship' or 'employability' as a concern on all but the most recent of its research projects relating to higher education (e.g. Brown, 2004; Burns, 2007), thus embedding the government's instrumentalist view into how the art subjects are thought about and potentially restricting other topics of research.⁸ New research becomes a vehicle of 'the discourse producers of the day and their strategically constructed future images' (Andersen, 2003, v, quoted above).

Having a vested interest through institutional allegiance in a particular research outcome also can be applicable to the conservatoire in-house research department enquiring into its own practices; to what extent is it possible to research institutional practices from within? Researchers have to be careful not to blur the line between social science research and 'research as evaluation' which both entail different aims despite using similar methods. Trochim (2006) describes evaluation as 'useful feedback' for the institution in which it is conducted, but stresses it is 'distinguishable from more traditional social research.'⁹ Though evaluation borrows methodologies from the social sciences, it is tied to a 'political and organizational context' and requires 'political dexterity, sensitivity to multiple stakeholders and other skills that social research in general does not rely on as much' (ibid).

Brown and Dowling (2010) caution the would-be practitioner-researcher against inadequate engagement with the theoretical field which can arise out of foregrounding an everyday working knowledge experienced as a practitioner in the empirical setting (2010, 170). Characterising educational research as involving constant dialogue between the empirical and the theoretical, Brown and Dowling recommend that 'professional educational practice' and 'academic educational research' remain as 'distinct fields of activity'. Though they argue that educational research can set out to answer questions which have a bearing on educational practice, the practitioner-researcher must engage with the practices of research which entail the re-contextualisation of the empirical setting as an abstracted site of interrogation (ibid).

⁸ <http://www.palatine.ac.uk/publications/project-research/>. Accessed 24.09.10.

⁹ <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/intreval.php>. Accessed 12.10.10.

Without adequate theoretical engagement , which acts as a useful distancing move for the practitioner-researcher, research findings can be compromised, particularly if evaluation of the efficacy of current practice is recruited to prove that an institution has found the key to best practice and is practising it in a given area. For instance, Mills' use of subjective career (2004a), detailed in my literature review, to track graduate employment destinations, confirmed that most alumni of her institution were working in music careers. However, the use of this methodology raises questions about whether those researching their own institutions can be independent. An interim newsletter detailing research progress, drew the following conclusions:

We can already say that only six of the 147 musicians we spoke to had chosen to leave the music profession within five years of leaving the RCM [....] This means that the music training at the RCM is more 'successful' than some other forms of vocational training. For example, statistics recently published in the Times Educational Supplement state that most of those who train as school teachers leave the profession within three years (Royal College of Music, Working in Music, Newsletter 1, 2002, 2)

Though this is a 'newsletter' rather than a recognised product of research (e.g. peer reviewed journal article) there are problems with the linking of the research findings to the current practice of the conservatoire. Firstly, there is a questionable logic of comparing the music profession to a profession such as teaching where notions such as 'subjective career' are less relevant, as teachers in schools are usually employees. Secondly, the interim conclusions are compromised by a willingness to find that the results show that the institution is 'successful'. In all the cases cited above, the research outcome is of benefit to the sponsoring or commissioning institution, therefore, a consideration of the motivations for inquiry becomes a necessary part of evaluating research documents.

If I subject other writers and institutions to scrutiny, then my own position must be questioned too. My bias, which will inevitably exist from whatever position I launch my enquiries and whichever theoretical framework I will bring to bear on my empirical data, must be declared. In chapter 4, I discuss my methodological position with respect to data collection in my empirical setting. In this chapter, I admit that it is a challenge to find an adequate vantage point from which to make sense of my data, with my current immersion in professional debates and my own position as an in-house

researcher conducting interviews at the conservatoire which is sponsoring me to research.

If engaged in criticism, one is forced to take a particular side in the debate from which to angle one's argument, depending perhaps on one's professional, political, or personal beliefs, or one is left constructing a seemingly neutral position or external 'transcendental' vantage-point (Eagleton, 1991, xxii) by playing off one side against another, in a kind of dialectics that never reaches a desired resolution, but instead by way of conclusion, quietly settles for the side of the debate that had the most personal resonance in the first place, presenting it as the 'correct' viewpoint or an incontestable research finding, with all the persuasive rhetorical force that the word 'research' can bring (see Brown and Dowling, 2010, 168-169). In this way, one can easily end up criticising old practices from the perspective of the new, a marginal position from that of a normative position (Foucault, 1972, 18; Andersen, 2003, xvi), or vice versa. The problems for the practitioner-researcher here are twofold; firstly that criticism as a mode of argument construction can acquire a partisan nature according to one's personal preferences; secondly that assumptions about the terms and concepts in a given debate can slip by unnoticed, meaning that casual causal relationships are imputed without questioning their appropriateness.

3.3 Second order observations

To circumvent some of these problems of finding an adequate vantage point, I have adopted a method of questioning my data which is called second-order observation (Andersen, 2003, xi). As distinct from first-order observations, which ask 'what is out there?' and seek to draw up accounts that represent the 'real world', second-order observations aim to open up the point of observation from which the researcher or society constructs its accounts, acknowledging that the point of observation will shape the research account. Since all observations entail the making of categories and distinctions which create the framework for observations to be made, second order observation attempts to look at how the categories and distinctions themselves are constructed.

Table 1 summarises some of the differences between first and second order observation:

Table 1: First and second order observations

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(Developed from Andersen, 2003, xiii)

This change in focus brings about a different type of questioning, intent on different types of answer other than offering representations of the empirical world. It involves questioning the emergence and constituent character of categories, themes, interests or arguments by looking at 'their construction, their history, their position within the fields of our focus' (ibid, ix). Questions, instead of beginning with 'what?' or 'why?', start with 'how?' Instead of asking 'what do people believe?', or 'why do people believe [a certain thing]?', the emphasis is on 'how do people believe [a certain thing]?' Put another way, the general area of concern is; in which forms and under which conditions has a certain system of meaning (such as a discourse, a semantics or a system of communication) come into being? (ibid, xii).

This line of questioning lends itself well to my research interests, allowing me to ask of my research data:

1. What are the historical and social conditions of cognition for a particular discourse?

For instance, in chapter 5 I look into the social and historical conditions that gave rise to a discourse of classical music.

2. How is a particular discourse being constructed, confirmed or contested?

In chapter 6 and 7, I look at how discourses of classical music are constructed, confirmed and contested through modern conservatoire practices.

From these questions, it becomes apparent that I am primarily interested in the performative function of my texts – the work they accomplish – rather than the form or content of the texts themselves.

Since the object ‘out there’ has no preference as to how it is observed, we should explicitly set out our plan for observing it. In short, second order observation is about making the lines of observation clear either in your own observations or those of others, and making these also the object of research. The use of the phrase ‘analytical strategy’ highlights that the point of observation is a ‘deliberate *choice* with deliberate implications’ (Andersen’s emphasis, *ibid*, xiii), rather than an arbitrary or customary mode of observation.

The benefits to my research of taking such a theoretical stance are twofold: firstly, this approach offers a way of deferring immediate judgement; given my position as an insider researcher, it is productive to view the empirical field through a theoretical framework which discourages making assumptions about observations and making automatic links between them based on my own everyday experience. An analysis can be developed which challenges and confronts expectations, paving the way to see things in a different light; indeed, adopting such a foreign way of seeing in this thesis led to research outcomes far from my initial hunches. Second order observation thus offers a route to analyse the potential strangeness of the knowledge which we take as true at present. Secondly, it offers a way for empirical work to take place. A second order analytical strategy allows for the researcher to interact with empirical objects and phenomena whilst at the same time being explicit about how the research account is being constructed. That a particular analytical strategy has been selected as the mode of enquiry highlights in advance the way the account will be biased.

I have chosen to take Foucault's approach to discourse as a starting point for my own investigations (Foucault, 1972). After a general exposition of Foucault's ideas, I will outline which aspects I use in my work and why it is productive for me to do so.

3.4 History of the present

Foucault (after Nietzsche, see for instance, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 1887) used history to show the constructivist nature of society; that accepted truths or ways of describing or labelling people were in fact built upon contingent human practices and specific historical conditions that made the categorisations possible (Foucault, 1991 76-100; Andersen, 2003, 17). His motivation for the study of history was not solely a tool for understanding the past, but rather a method to shed light on the present. As a motivation for recruiting the historical method to research, this in itself is not contentious; for instance, Cox on the relevance of historical study to today's music education says 'historical research is quite able to deal with questions that contemporary practitioners are concerned about' (1996, 27), whilst the musicologist Dahlhaus on the subject of abstract music (defined and discussed in chapter 5) writes;

Understanding the historical purpose of the idea serves two purposes: first, to prepare for the insight that what has come about historically can also be changed again; second, to understand more precisely the nature of today's more predominant conception of music by becoming aware of its origins, i.e. the assumptions that underlie it, and of the background against which it sets itself off (1989, 8).

The realisation that that which is historically contingent can also be changed is used by Foucault to give added force to his use of history as a method. The study of history becomes an emancipatory force (see also Mills, 2004b, 15).

Foucault may have shared a motivation to use history to comment on the present day with other historians, however, his historical method poses challenges and invites explanation, requiring an 'unlearning' of traditional historiographical ways of thinking (see Kendall and Wickham, 1999). Talking of his own theoretical antecedents, Foucault notes that where historians had once aimed to look at continuities of history, going back ever more in time to find 'silent beginnings, and the never-ending tracing-back to the original precursors', this endeavour had been superseded by those who aimed to:

show that the history of a concept is not only and entirely that of its progressive refinement, its continuously increasing rationality ... but that of its various fields of constitution and validity, that of its successive rules of use, that of the many theoretical contexts in which it developed and matured. (1972, 5)

Foucault believed that certain familiar historical concepts lead to automatic and misleading assumptions being made about historical continuity, for instance: tradition ('enables us to isolate the new against a background of permanence, and to transfer its merit to originality, to genius, to the decisions proper to individuals'), influence ('which links, at a distance and through time – as if through the mediation of a medium of propagation – such defined unities as individuals, *ouvrres*, nations, or theories'), and 'spirit' ('which allows the sovereignty of collective consciousness to emerge as the principle of unity and explanation' (ibid, 23-24). Other key drivers of the urge towards identifying historical continuity include the search for progress, development and evolution, in which it becomes all too easy to find future events immanent in earlier ones. As Kendall and Wickham advise, when using Foucault's methods one must refrain from trying to impose ideas of progress or regress, or from making links such as 'because this is, that will be' (1999, 4). Foucault is also wary of disciplinary categories such as 'literature' or 'politics' on the grounds that they have articulated different fields at different times, changing, for instance, from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the nineteenth century (ibid, 25; see also, for instance, Eagleton, 1996, 1-18 for historically contingent definitions of literature). As a point of methodological rigour, Foucault rejects these preformed categories as an *a priori* organising principle of history.

What he suggests in their place, is in the first instance a taking apart of history to find discontinuity, and in the second instance, the forming of historical continuity according to unities of discourse. Discourse becomes both the organising principle of history and the subject of its inquiry. The rejection of 'pre-existing forms of continuity' (Foucault, 1972, 28), however, is not absolute. Foucault does admit to taking disciplinary categories such as 'psycho-pathology, medicine, or political economy' (ibid, 29) as starting-points for research, to scrutinise them for the circumstances under which they were formed, perhaps leading to the conclusion that these categories are 'ultimately the surface effect of more firmly grounded unities' (ibid). Foucault takes history's

agreed groupings only in as far as he can interrogate them for the rules of their formation, re-order and regroup them, and construct a new theory of them (ibid), though he also does not preclude the possibility that as a result of the process of questioning, categories which were broken apart will, as an outcome of analysis, be found to deserve to be left intact after all. The principal is that nothing must be presupposed, even the presupposition that all pre-existing categories will as a matter of course need to be reordered.

Foucault aims that suspending familiar forms of continuity open up a 'vast field' (ibid, 29), and it is to defining this field of discourse that I now turn, firstly by comparing conceptions of Foucault's discourse with its theoretical antecedents in ideology, and then by presenting descriptions of Foucault's discourse analysis.

3.5 Discourse and Ideology

Foucault's interest in history to show that society is the product of social and historical circumstances rather than a fixed, predetermined entity places him on a long line of thought deriving from Marxist influenced notions of ideology. Discourse theory can also be seen to be built upon the notion of ideology, in that ideology is seen to have important political functions which order the social world, and that ideology is not always visible to individuals, be they producers or consumers of it (Freeden, 2003, 11). Whereas Foucault had a somewhat mixed view of Marx's conception of ideology (see Mills, 2003, 15), in many respects, he can be seen to have drawn upon some of Althusser's modified notions of Marxist ideology. For instance, where Marx had seen ideology as a false consciousness that was deliberately promulgated by the state, the church and German idealist philosophy, Althusser expanded ideology's scope so that it was a 'new reality' (rather than a false one) which could be exercised through any number of institutions, for instance the legal system, cultural structures, the mass media, the family and the educational system' (Althusser, 1984, 17). Through these institutions, ideology could take on material form through social practices rather than just existing within the realm of ideas.

Foucault's conception of discourse expanded this yet further, producing significant differences in the scope and reach of discourse compared to ideology. Firstly, he rejected the idea that ideology existed primarily to keep an economic system in place. Secondly, whereas Marx and Marxist thinkers such as Althusser saw ideology as something imposed by those who held positions of authority onto the repressed (ibid, 8-9), Foucault's notion of discourse held that the pathways of power were much more complex, with the possibility to move up and laterally between social groups, so that no one group was automatically and permanently powerless (Mills, 2003, 52). Foucault also rethought the effects of power; where Althusser saw ideology as constraining those who it was foisted upon, Foucault held that there was a possibility that repression of one group by another could lead to productive forms of new behaviour, not just restriction and censure. Foucault did not assume 'that the individual is powerless in relation to institutions or to the state' (ibid). Where ideology worked primarily in a top-down direction to maintain the capitalist economic system, Foucault saw discourse as a dynamic entity, acting on all spheres of social life, with each discourse having the capacity to give rise to counterdiscourse. His study of discourse became the study of how certain practices gain legitimacy over others and by what authority these discourses are held in place, maintained or blocked out by other practices. To describe his discourse analytical method, Foucault used the terms archive, discursive formation, and statement, of which I will now present various definitions.

3.6 Discourse, archive, discursive formation, statement

Foucault admitted that 'instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word 'discourse', I believe that I have in fact added to its meanings' (1972, 90). A feature of Foucault's style in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, where he attempts an exploration of the methodologies he has used to date and attempts to formulate his ideas on discourse, is that he uses writing as a way to develop his ideas, 'a labyrinth into which I can venture' (1972, 19), rather than a codification of already pre-formulated ideas. An important ploy in his philosophical method is to arrive at definitions by first of all stating what something – be it historical continuity, discourse

or statements – was *not*. By this process of elimination, concepts often shift and appear paradoxical. Andersen also points out that by unwillingly and unwittingly forming a school of thought, Foucault has spawned books on nearly every aspect of his work and person so that ‘it is now almost impossible to refer to Foucault without being held accountable for various readings of Foucault’ (2003, 1). Here I aim to describe the conceptual elements which relate to the analytical strategies used in my thesis by citing Foucault’s definitions alongside some of his interpreters.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault describes discourse as ‘made up of the totality of all effective statements (whether spoken or written), in their dispersion as events and in the occurrence that is proper to them’ (ibid, 29). Andersen writes ‘discourse is the final, actually demarcated body of formulated statements – it is the archive of the discourse analyst’ (2003, 8). Mills is more elaborate in her interpretation of Foucault’s discourse as:

groups of statements which deal with the same topic and which seem to produce a similar effect; for example, they may be groups of statements which are grouped together because of some institutional pressure or association, because of a similarity of origin, or because they have a similar function Discourses should be seen as groups of statements which are associated with institutions, which are authorised in some sense and which have some unity of function at a fundamental level (2003, 64-65)

Each of these three descriptions agree that discourse is the sum total of statements which cohere in some way. That they are nothing more or nothing less accounts for the second half of Foucault’s definition. His use of ‘dispersion as events’, refers to a key property of discourse, that it is made up of material events (Foucault, 1972, 112); discourse is not a *Zeitgeist*, or an ideology which pre-exists on the level of thought, seeking a material outlet. Neither is it a platonic ideal-type with which a real world correlate attempts to conform. A discourse can only be described as a result of something which has happened; it does not exist purely on the level of an interpretative framework. Foucault in fact described his work as an act of ‘felicitous positivism’, ‘a pure description of discursive facts’ (quoted in Andersen, 2003, 10).

Though a statement must have a material existence, its essential character lies in its enunciative, declaratory function, or as Andersen puts it, a statement is 'the smallest unit which brings forth phenomenon through enunciation' (2003, 11). The phenomena that they enunciate are objects, subjects, conceptual networks, and strategies (Andersen, 2003, 16). Though an object can exist independently of us, discourse 'is a system which structures the way that we perceive reality' (Mills, 2003, 55). Statements construct, classify and identify discursive objects (Andersen, 2003, 11) so that discourse constrains as much as it enables how we see objects (Mills, 2003, 55).

When it came to subjects, Foucault rejected the authority of the first person account:

To describe a formulation *qua* statement does not consist in analysing the relations between the author and what he says (or wanted to say, or said without wanting to); but in determining what position can and must be occupied by any individual if he is to be the subject of it. (1972, 107)

Foucault argued that an account which centred on the first person, lived in experience of the subject – a phenomenological approach as advocated by Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre (for instance, 1964, 2002, 1957 respectively) – could only tell a partial story, as it missed out the conditions that made it possible for a person to think or act as they did in the first place. Instead, Foucault held that people adopted certain subject positions in order to make viable statements. That individuals' utterances are governed by rules which limit what can or cannot be said at a particular time, rather than individual human agency, placed Foucault in accord with the structuralist and post-structuralist theoretical stances of his time. However, he rejected descriptions of his work as such, as both approaches aim to search and uncover hidden structures which operate on different levels in texts or in society. By putting forward that there is only one level at work in the world, that of appearances, Foucault has been characterised by Andersen as 'a phenomenologist, without consciousness as the origin of meaning – a subjectless phenomenology' (2003, 2).

Mills and Andersen's definitions of discourse, above, attempt to address how statements might cohere into discourses. Statements which share something in common or cohere in some sense form a discourse, or to use Foucault's more specific term, a discursive formation (1972, 34). But what might this 'something in common',

coherence between statements, or 'group of conditions of existence' (Foucault, 1972, 131) be? Whilst statements exist in themselves, it is the work of the discourse analyst to group statements into discourses, to regulate them so that they follow particular rules. How might statements be regulated to form a discursive formation? In the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault (1972) was careful to articulate what did not form a unity of discourse. Statements were not necessarily grouped together into discourses by theme, content, disciplinary subject, genre, medium or author.¹⁰ Rather, the way they cohere becomes apparent when one identifies how statements are dispersed, maintained, multiplied or suppressed. Statements can therefore be grouped into discourse because they share rules or strategies governing their formation. The role of the discourse analyst becomes to ascertain the rules and strategies whereby statements and discursive formations can come into existence, or put another way, to articulate the set of rules which govern that which can or cannot be said or practised at a particular time. Mills interprets this as:

rather than seeing discourse as simply a set of statements which have some coherence, we should, rather, think of discourse as existing because of a complex set of practices which try to keep them in circulation and other practices which try and fence them off from others and keep those statements out of circulation. (2003, 54).

Statements must exist as part of an associated field of other statements and conceptual networks. It is not possible to have a discourse comprised of a single statement, as discursive statements are always related to other statements; though they have material existence, they are not 'the same kind of unit as a material object, with its limits and independence' (Foucault, 1972, 97). According to Foucault:

There is no statement in general, no free, neutral, independent statement; but a statement always belongs to a series or a whole, always plays a role among other statements, deriving support from them and distinguishing itself from them: it is always part of a network of statements, in which it has a role, however minimal it may be to play. (ibid, 111)

Foucault attempts to describe the nature of statements further, asking whether they can be seen as 'the atom of discourse' (ibid, 90). However, as soon as he is about to describe them as a discrete object, a type of building block of discourse, he has to

¹⁰ Though they can be, if they also happen to conform to the relevant regulatory rule.

admit they are not so easy to define. Though statements can exist in the domain of the written or spoken word, they do not have to exist along the grammatical structure of sentences (ibid, 92) or form logical propositional structures (ibid, 91).¹¹ In the above definitions, Mills also includes practices as part of what can constitute statements, and Foucault himself refers to 'discursive practices' (ibid, 131). Though description of practices will necessarily remain verbal, the inclusion of practices – activities that people do – in addition to verbal communications as discursive statements expand the reach of discourse studies further as institutional practices can be viewed as discursive entities.

The last tenet of Foucault's discourse analysis which I will outline here before discussing the relevance of his ideas to my work is the archive. His starting point for discourse analysis was the assembling of an archive; 'one ought to read everything, study everything. In other words, one must have at one's disposal the general archive of a period at a given moment' (Foucault, 1998, 298). In this, he meant that one shouldn't look for discourse in only the most obvious of places, for instance, by searching for a neatly circumscribed theme in only official documentation; instead, Foucault cast his net widely and looked at philosophical works, scientific dissertations and pictures, as well as regulations and accounts of institutions (Andersen, 2003, 13). The respect in which Foucault was interested in the 'archive', however, was not as the sum total of sources amassed on a subject which built up a comprehensive picture of how things were, but because it represented the 'sum total of the discursive formations circulating at any one time' (Mills, 2004b, 64) or 'the unwritten rules which lead to the production of certain types of statements' (Andersen, 2003, 13). At all times, Foucault was interested in the rules and strategies of discursive formations rather than their content.

¹¹ Both Foucault and others have expanded the range of what can be taken as a statement to include also images; Mills gives an example of a map as capable of functioning as a discursive statement, whilst Foucault also included paintings (1974) and architectural plans (1977) in a spatial analysis which he argued embodied channels of authority between groups in society.

3.7 Using Foucault's methods

My analysis chapters (5-7) each use slightly different analytical strategies developed from Foucault's discourse analysis. Chapter 5 uses historical method on historical data to show how conservatoires became an institutionalisation of the discourse of classical music. By contrast, chapters 6 and 7 use different analytical strategies to view my interview data from my empirical setting to find continuities and discontinuities with the discourse of classical music, thus highlighting competing discourses. Whether dealing with historical data or interview text, my approach is unified by my intent to identify patterns of discourse.

My decision to mix both historical and contemporary data makes this study a hybrid endeavour, mixing elements of Foucauldian historical method, with methods perhaps more familiar to social psychologists (e.g. Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard, 1996) or critical discourse analysts (e.g. Fairclough, 2003), who draw on the aspects of Foucault's work informed by the belief that language shapes reality and reveals knowledge-power networks to analyse small amounts of spoken or written text. Whilst all the above methods are now established modes of conducting social science research, my use of hybrid methods provides a way to describe the discourses of purpose of my empirical setting on different levels, of its historical contingency, the historical continuity of discourse and the points of discontinuity at their point of contestation in the contemporary conservatoire. These combined methods build a nuanced and thorough description of conservatoire discourses as dynamic entities.

On the use of historical method, whilst much of what we take for granted in today's practice of classical music is said by musicologists to be the product of nineteenth century values and attitudes to music (Dahlhaus, 1989, 8; Cook, 2000, 18; Taruskin, 2005, vol 2, 649-651), music higher education research has left this to one side to concentrate on contemporary contexts. This gap makes Foucault's 'history of the present' a productive tool for inquiry into the historical contingency at work in today's conservatoire practices. Though using historical methods to change current practice is not my primary aim, the capacity for change as a result of historical illumination could

be a legitimate outcome of future research following on from the findings of this thesis, as I suggest in chapter 8.

The construction of my historical 'archive' and the nature of the sources that I have drawn from is discussed in more depth at the beginning of chapter 5. However, it is worth pointing out now that my decision in chapter 5 to take a large time-span and concentrate on several institutions rather than just one is consistent with a Foucauldian historical approach which relies on taking 'chronologically vast enough' (1972, 33; see also Andersen, 2003, 21) stretches of time as the subject of inquiry to identify discontinuities of discourse which looking at a single institution in a smaller timeframe would not afford. I do not only rely on accounts of these institutions, but also look at nineteenth century aesthetics to provide a 'general archive of a period at a given moment' (Andersen, 2003, 13).

In chapters 6 and 7, I employ discourse analysis to interview data from my empirical setting, thus widening the scope of my overall archive, in terms of both my source materials and the range of discourse it enables me to describe; though my study is by no means exhaustive, I hope that by varying the discourse analytical strategies in each chapter, I present a multi-faceted account of conservatoire discourses. With this approach I hope to bring out the dynamic nature of social and institutional practices; though I aim to bring out a sense of historical continuity, I am in no way suggesting that the modern conservatoire is set in aspic, rather it is the site of ongoing discursive play between discursive formations old and new.

In both chapters 6 and 7, I use approaches to data analysis which are consistent with those embraced by social scientists who have challenged research methodologies that 'express commitment to viewing events, actions, norms, values, etc. from the perspective of the people who are being studied' (Bryman cited in Prior, 1997, 61), because it is rarely the individual's view that is being sought out as the sole object of research, but a wider target. This wider target, it is argued is better accessed through observing forms of collective activity, a 'dimension of activity that cannot be contained in the consciousness of the isolated subject' (Prior, 1997, 64). Additionally, in terms of my status as researcher-practitioner, in analysing the texts generated from interviews

with my work colleagues, I am happier accounting for phenomenon in terms of the rules governing their use, with discourse patterns constructed by me the researcher, rather than attributing each individual's view solely as the product of an idiosyncratic agency.

In contrast to chapter 5 where the historical scope of my data is wide, in chapters 6 and 7, I rigorously narrow the data I analyse, selecting my participant data by topic (see Mills above, 2003, 64-5), imposing a limited but consistent analytical approach throughout each chapter. My rationale for this approach is prompted by the aim to make clear that discourse is a product of what the discourse analyst does (c.f. social psychology approaches which see discourse analysis as a quasi-scientific method which can reveal representations of reality, see Mills, 2004b, 116). This does not mean that the outcomes of analysis are arbitrary or purely subjective as the discourse analyst biases the research account by imposing specified analytical strategies onto the data (Brown and Dowling, 2010, 93). My limited view of my data also takes heed of Andersen's caution that unless a stringent explanation is given of the analytical strategies that are being used and analytical self-discipline is exercised in using them, then the resulting research can lack meticulousness; 'often, it is extremely difficult to identify the basis of [social] scientific studies, and, unfortunately more often than not, the criticism raised by more mainstream-positivist positions is well justified' (Andersen, 2003, xiv). As a result, I choose my topics according to discourses constructed in each preceding chapter and I build further descriptions of discourse by close reading of small amounts of interview text. This means that I have used only a small quantity of my gathered data, and that other themes that could have been legitimately analysed, have been sacrificed in the pursuit of analytical rigour.

My sampling methods and analytical strategies are explained in more detail at the beginnings of chapters 6 and 7. Whilst chapter 6 aims to provide a generalised description from individual accounts of participants describing specific conservatoire practices isolated in chapter 5, in chapter 7, the theme by which I select texts is the use of a particular word. In pursuing this kind of strategy, I deviate the most from Foucault's methods, though I adhere to his principal of questioning the assumptions

that lie behind familiar, everyday concepts (Mills, 2003, 6). I pursue an analytical strategy used notably by discourse theorists Laclau and Mouffe to look at how the word 'skill' is used by participants and institutional literature as an 'empty signifier' – a word which owing to its ambiguity of meaning can become a carrier of particular discourses (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Freeden, 2003, 110; see also Barnett, 1992, 44 and Phipps, 2010, 46 for similar treatments of words such as 'creativity' and 'quality' in higher education literature). I look at how use of the word skill creates an ambiguity of meaning which facilitates the construction, confirmation and contestation of particular discourses in my empirical setting. In charting how what a skill represents shifts between different participants, I show that the word takes on a primarily performative function, rather than signifying a stable, agreed meaning. Whilst looking at the performative function of a linguistic element is compatible with Foucault's approach to discourse, it differs in that the analytical strategy requires looking at the apparent content of words too. Discourse reveals itself in the shifting meanings of words; the ambiguity between the signifier and the signified is a route to describing the discursive strategic functions of words.

My search for particular discourses, topics and words also includes looking for absences and silences as well as positive occurrences of statements, thus following Andersen's elaboration:

we are not only to look for those events that stand out clearly as seen from the present, but also for those constructions, strategies and practices that, for some reason, never distinguish themselves, disintegrated or changed into something else (2003, 21).

Chapters 6 and 7 identify when themes are absent and the counter-discourses the silences construct, just as chapter 5 identifies practices and subject positions which became impossible in relation to the discourse of classical music.

Each chapter aims to trace the conceptual networks which sustain various conservatoire discourses. For instance, chapter 5 traces the conceptual networks of nineteenth century aesthetics which are instantiated in the discourse of classical music, chapter 6 looks at how the discourse of classical music constructs and sustains the concept of the performer, whilst chapter 7 looks at how discourses of modern

higher education act as counterdiscourses to the discourse of classical music by looking at how curriculum and 'skills' are talked about.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed my approach to discourse analysis and outlined my rationale behind its use. A Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis allows me to bring a consistent aim to my thesis, that of describing discourses of purpose in the conservatoire from varied empirical data including historical sources and interviews texts. It also offers a way of deferring immediate judgement; given my position as a practitioner researcher, it is productive to view the empirical field through a theoretical framework that discourages making assumptions about observations or making automatic links between them based on my own everyday experience. An analysis can be developed which challenges and confronts expectations, paving the way to see things in a different light.

Though I have outlined here the theoretical presuppositions used in this thesis, further methodological issues arise in relation to data collection; in chapter 5, I elaborate further on the sources used for my historical account, whilst now, in chapter 4, I look at my methods of data collection in the light of my position as practitioner-researcher using my own place of work as my empirical setting.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

I argued in chapter 3 that second order observation allows the researcher to develop analytical distance from the topic of research. However, issues of method, particularly with respect to the recontextualisation of my work environment to the empirical setting of my research, also required careful consideration. Though I have argued that this study operates on the level of appearances with regard to the analysis of data, the selections that are made as to which data should be collected and the methods used for its collection can influence the data available for analysis.

In this chapter, I will consider my methods, starting with the problem of recontextualising the conservatoire from an institution where I once studied and to one where I now teach, to the site of my research. Moving from the practice of education to the practice of educational research, I discuss the advantages and disadvantages of conducting research from 'insider' and 'outsider' positions, with an 'insider' denoting a researcher who is familiar to the research environment and those inside it in another role (e.g. as a teacher), and an 'outsider' being a researcher who has no prior relationship to the institution or the people from which she conducts research. Then I detail my reasons for deciding to conduct research from an insider position.

In the following section, I talk through which data I compiled and collected for this research, and contrast the role of documentary data with that of interview data, stating that the inclusion of interview data in the study provides a check on my own selections of documentary evidence. I then theorise my use of interviews before detailing my sampling methods. An account of my pilot interviews with students follows, where I discuss the recontextualisation which happened between me, the students and teachers, brought about by my change of role from teacher to researcher. I consider my influence in the research interview, my responses to the participants and the subsequent changes I made to my interview method. The implications this may have for my data and subsequent analysis is also discussed. I

conclude this section with a discussion of teacher responses to my new role as a researcher, before comparing the interview responses of students and teachers.

My final section is a consideration of ethics in insider research and asks whether some approaches to insider research are more ethical than others. I examine how a desire to avoid offending colleagues can affect research methods, data analysis or research outcomes and relate an incident when findings of conservatoire research was contested by another conservatoire-world insider. Afterwards, I consider issues of confidentiality and anonymity in my own research.

4.2 The Researcher and the Researched

My place in the conservatoire

My own relation to the conservatoire in which my interviews took place, my education and my position in the music profession should be declared at the outset, to illuminate my own potential blindspots; I attended the Saturday Junior School of the conservatoire as a student from age 15-18, and then returned in 2002 as an hourly paid teacher on the undergraduate BMus course for the academic Music Studies department. Since 2003, I have also taught at the Junior school which caters for pupils aged 11-18. In addition to teaching, I have undertaken small scale research projects funded by the school's Research Committee focusing on issues of 'teaching and learning'. Outside the conservatoire, I did a B.A. and M.St. degree in musicology at a UK university and then completed a two year M.A. degree in violin performance at a conservatoire in the USA. As a professional, I have been a freelance violinist, a violin teacher, and have worked with various education departments of cultural institutions in community outreach projects. In short, as well as being employed to teach and research the conservatoire in question, I have a stake in the narrative of my experiences in music education and as a member of the music profession. These experiences also make me a 'double' insider – I am familiar both to the everyday experience of my empirical field, as well as the specificities of my empirical setting.

Insider and outsider research

Having declared my personal stake in the conservatoire and wider music profession, it is worth discussing what the ramifications of conducting research from such a position are, not least because there are clear advantages and disadvantages to both approaches, as well as familiar concerns, such as students being fearful of the authority of teachers (Miller and Baker, 2007). An outsider position is seen as having the necessary distance to deliver an 'objective' research account. Supposedly, when observing people, practices and objects, previous personal relationships or associations do not get in the way. However, the limits of such objectivity should be considered; it is never possible to be truly objective; one cannot take the researcher, with the sum total of all her shifting or culturally rooted and unacknowledged assumptions, knowledge and experience, out of the way she views and evaluates the world. Whether these ways of viewing the particular empirical setting are appropriate or not will be a factor of equal concern when researching contexts that are *both* familiar and unfamiliar. Since misunderstandings of the general context of the empirical field can be a distinct disadvantage when researching fields from outside of the researcher's previous experience, this would seem to place the insider account at an advantage in this respect.

However, there are disadvantages too. Extra care has to be taken with this information with regard to what can be used. Ethical guidelines state that 'informed consent' should govern the collection of data, so informal conversations with students and colleagues cannot be explicitly cited in the research account, even though such experiences cannot be erased from the mind of the researcher. Further dangers lie in conferring a privileged position for insider research too; though someone may be well placed to research a particular empirical field, the researcher will always bring about an act of recontextualisation in transforming the place of work into the empirical field or setting (Brown and Dowling, 2010, 7). Taking one's own place of work as an empirical setting, rather than choosing an equivalent institution in the same field, can open one up to accusations of allegiances and biases, and of an approach which is not sufficiently critical of the status quo. As a result, one can fail to get a position of sufficient distance from everyday concerns, and potential problems can occur with

participants who interpret your act of recontextualisation in unanticipated ways. Though my position as a researcher at an external institution (Institute of Education) places me with a primary aim of turning out a competent piece of research rather than portraying my place of work either favourably or unfavourably, various problems of recontextualisation on my part, and also on the part of the students and colleagues who took part in the study, did emerge.

My choice of empirical setting

An alternative to adopting an insider or outsider position in research is taken by researchers who decide to go to a similar institution that they are not employed by, that is still within the same empirical field, thus getting the best of both the insider and outsider positions (for instance, Feichas, 2006). However, the extent to which one can recast oneself as an outsider if one is familiar with the empirical field, even if an unfamiliar empirical setting is the focus of research, remains questionable. My choice of conducting interviews at the conservatoire in which I teach was an obvious one for me. Choosing my own institution as the focus of research was based on several practical considerations as well as ones that were germane to the nature of the enquiry itself (see Robson, 2002, 535). Firstly, it proved to be time efficient, which was particularly important in the first two years of the study when data collection took place concurrent to my teaching activities. Secondly, being in the conservatoire made it easy to arrange interviews, both in terms of finding willing participants, and in terms of being able to use the premises to conduct the majority of interviews. Using the conservatoire rooms had the additional benefit of being neutral territory for both me and the participants; or if 'neutral territory' is an ill-fitting descriptor, then a territory that is likely in equal measure to be loaded with prior associations and memories for all involved. Further reasons involved funding channels; the conservatoire research committee has generously funded my fees for the duration of my doctoral research and it was a speculation I made in setting out the conservatoire as my empirical field that the research committee would have a vested interest in funding such a study.

However, far more compelling a reason than all the practical ones cited above, was that this research grew out of my own practice as a practitioner-researcher. My

previous research had culminated in the realisation that making my own teaching the focus of enquiry was of limited scope in understanding what was going on in the institution around me and how my work with students could fit into this larger picture.

4.3 Recontextualising the empirical setting

From place of work to site of research: which data?

To operationalise my research to look into this 'larger picture', I needed to recontextualise my place of work as my empirical setting, which entailed the making of selections on sources and methods of collecting data. Though the conservatoire has been under-researched, this is not through a lack of several sources of easily available textual information, which could be used as material for discourse analysis. Documents produced by or on the site of the conservatoire includes prospectuses, strategic reviews, staff newsletters, press office publicity, the contents of noticeboards, course descriptions and documents. Text sources outside this empirical field include documents and newsletters from the UK association of conservatoires (CUKAS), government commissioned literature from HEFCE on conservatoires (e.g. Tooley, 1998; HEFCE, 2000) and higher education, to articles in the press. I also considered using existing research, which would normally form part of a literature review, as data, on the grounds that it can also contribute to the formation of discourse. My introductory account of the conservatoire literature in chapter 1, of musicology's erasure of performers from its histories in favour of composers, or music education's current recurring interest with the employability of graduate music students, shows that previous research not only comments on objects in the world and the discourses they produce, but can construct, confirm or silence them too.

However, in practice, despite a Foucauldian approach to the archive which invites an inclusive approach to what counts as data, selections had to be made on which sources were used. I describe my sampling procedures towards historical material at the beginning of chapter 5. In chapters 6 and 7 I used two types of data. Documents from the conservatoire setting, such as handbooks and prospectuses, and from higher education, such as the Music Subject Benchmark Statement were taken as examples of

official conservatoire and public documents without a named author (see Prior, 1997).¹² These were contrasted with interviews with students and teachers from my empirical setting which potentially could allow me to identify discourses in other parts of the conservatoire culture and institutional hierarchy. This could enable me to explore a greater range of discourses that might be in operation at different levels of the institution and opened up the possibility of being able to construct discourses and counter-discourses that might work against official or public stances.

Though it would have been possible to conduct a discourse analysis using only documentary evidence from official or public sources, conducting interviews forced me to engage with my empirical setting in a way that was not completely under my control; whilst documentary research relies on the researcher to select the documents that are being examined, the researcher cannot control the exact nature of interview responses. Rather than allowing my own choices of documents or existing literature to become the sole data in the research account, interviews proved a productive way of testing the theories I had generated myself or come across in the literature against my empirical field. Interview data yielded new ideas which had not occurred to me within the limits of my own conservatoire experiences, or that ran counter to theories in the literature, giving effect to Clarke's description of the process of empirical research as the 'rubbing of attractive ideas up against the hard and bumpy edges of empirical reality' (2006, 31). However, as with the use of documentary sources, ultimately the choice of which interview texts to include, was mine.

4.4 Interviews in theory

Before going back to my empirical setting to elaborate on my choice of sampling methods, I will discuss some theoretical assumptions that lie behind my decision to use interviews as a source of data, and set out both the potential scope and the limits to what they can contribute to this study.

¹² For the Music Benchmark Statement, see <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/honours/music.asp>. Accessed 20.07.10.

Interviews are a common undertaking for the qualitative researcher, and with good reason, in that 'talk' provides a rich source of data. Cameron attributes two advantages to analysing talk; one is 'to make explicit what normally gets taken for granted', and the other is 'to show what talk accomplishes in people's lives and in society at large' (2001, 7). Tuckman (cited in Cohen and Manion, 1994, 272) describes the research interview as: 'providing access to what is "inside a person's head"'. In chapter 3, I argued that the individual's contribution can only be usefully assessed as constructing, confirming or contesting discourses in operation in society. However, there is a further point to make about drawing a straight forward link between the participants and the data they provide, in that it can pose a number of problems on an epistemological level that can make the unwary researcher overstate the reliability of her data. Unless one uses an established theory for working out the verity of what people say (for instance, a Freudian approach towards a hermeneutics of suspicion), the researcher actually has no way of determining what is 'inside a person's head' (c.f. Clarke and Hoggett, 2009). All the researcher is left with is what was said in the interview itself by the participant in response to the interviewer. The empirical researcher must realise that she has no access to determining whether the participants still held the same views a day after the interview, whether they were in fact deceiving the researcher or maybe even themselves, or how they selected what they chose to talk about. A discourse analysis approach is able to ignore this tenuous link between what people say and what they might really think, as it is not necessary to establish such a link to identify discursive statements in the interview text.

Though I argue that we do not know exactly why or how participants may emphasise different parts of their stories in an interview context, and that it is not productive to speculate, I would like to elaborate on two theoretical reasons behind such an assertion; whilst Foucault maintained that discourse analysis was concerned with 'appearances', the interview context itself can have a bearing on these appearances. The first concern is articulated by Brown and Dowling when they say:

the problem with the research interview is that in conducting an interview one is generally engaging in one setting – that of the interview itself – in order to access

information about another [...] this information is again mediated by principles of recontextualization which are imposed on their experiences by your subjects (2010,6).

The second, articulates a particular aspect of this act of recontextualisation; the dynamics between the participant and the researcher. The interview represents a kind of performance whereby interviewees give their responses for the benefit of the researcher. As Cameron cautions 'they may be telling the researcher what they think she wants to hear or what they would like her/him to believe' (2001, 14).

Rather than rendering the data invalid, this assertion recognises that interaction and mutual influence are an unavoidable part of every social interaction, be it in everyday conversation, or the research interview. Cameron calls the process of changing how you represent yourself in the light of who or why you are speaking 'a process of self-construction', and goes on to say 'it is an unavoidable element of all communicative acts: people do not simply answer questions, in any situation, without first making some assessment of who is asking and why' (ibid). Rather than presupposing that there is a 'correct' or 'true' version of events from which the participant may be led to deviate in any social interaction, the participant's account is best thought of as reactive and tailored towards the particular social situation in every interaction. It is an acknowledgement of this phenomena, that parties who take part in conversation mutually influence each other, that has led to my decision to use the word 'participant' rather than 'interviewee' to describe the other party in my interviews. Whilst 'interviewee' implies that something is done to a relatively passive agent by the interviewer, 'participant' captures much more accurately the process of construction and mutual influence that both parties are engaging in.

4.5 Interviews in practice

Sampling

I interviewed 16 students and 13 teachers. Some students and colleagues were ruled out at the outset as potential participants. For ethical reasons, particularly to avoid any problems with perceived authority in my dual role as teacher/researcher, I decided to avoid interviewing any students that I may have been teaching at the time of the

interviews as I did not want the interview to be mistaken as a potential encounter for assessment.

For a different set of reasons, I did not interview staff who were established in managerial roles. I speculated they would be too heavily invested in official discourses that appeared in conservatoire literature – especially as they may have played a key role in writing it – to differ from it significantly, thus removing the need for an interview.¹³ The issue of conservatoire documents and their authors is also an example of how insider knowledge can affect decisions in research; though many of the conservatoire handbooks are attributed to departments rather than particular authors, a knowledge of how department structures work and who authors or co-authors these documents affected my decision as to who to interview. The participants who took part in an interview who had managerial roles were new to their roles, so I speculated that they did not have the same degree of investment or need for justification of official discourses as they had not played a role in their formation/dissemination within the school at the time of interview.¹⁴

So who was interviewed? My choice of interviewees was made according to theoretical sampling, based on the general hypothesis that variables such as which course of study the student or teacher was engaged with and which year the student was in might have a bearing on the discourses embodied in the interview texts. Though random sampling is often seen as the ‘gold standard’ of sampling strategies, it works at its best with large numbers of participants to ensure a random but balanced spread of participants has contributed to the data. Since my interviews typically lasted between 45-75 minutes, with many more hours taken with data transcription and analysis, this ruled out random sampling as impractical. Furthermore, large numbers of participants are best reached by the lone researcher through questionnaires. I decided this was not the most appropriate method of exploring a range of participants’ discourses of

¹³ At a student seminar, there was discussion as to whether people leading an institution do write their own documents. I have decided to take the view that if someone puts their name on the end of a document, he or she is likely at least to have read and agreed with it, if not authored it.

¹⁴ At the site of my empirical setting, there have been many new appointments and changes of job title to reflect changing roles during the timeframe of my research, so this information should not compromise the anonymity of any particular participant.

purpose, as a questionnaire involves a higher degree of presupposition on the part of the researcher in the construction of the questions which are fixed no matter what the views of the participants, even though it could have involved many more teachers and students.

To bring out these potential differences in discourse, it was important to ask students to participate who represented a range of variables. In an attempt to give rise to the greatest variety of discourses, I decided to make sure my research participants included both genders, all year groups from undergraduate years 1-4 and post-graduate study, and a range (though in practice, not all) of principal study options. Although I could not guarantee that any of these characteristics would have a measurable impact on the data that each individual gave rise to during the interview, I will state how my choices of variable could affect the utterances of the participants by explaining the role of the 'principal study' in a conservatoire.

The choice of principal study is of foremost importance in a conservatoire, as it represents the instrument (or vocal type for singers, for instance, soprano) which a student specialises in. Studies in this specialism account for 80 out of a yearly total of 120 credits for undergraduate students and are responsible for a large part of the differences experienced by conservatoire students in the same year and on the BMus course. The content of each student's degree will differ considerably according to the department that her principal instrument belongs to, for instance in my empirical setting, at undergraduate level; Voice, Strings, Keyboard, Wind, Brass and Percussion or Composition. It will also vary according to whether the student is studying on the classical music, jazz or electronic music courses at undergraduate level, or in addition at postgraduate level, the community music or music therapy courses.

The cultural and musical histories of the different instruments will mean that students of the cello will have obvious, well trodden options of study and career paths open to them – such as orchestral performance – which students of the saxophone, more traditionally heard in jazz and pop music would not. Of course there are individual cellists working as cross-over artists in jazz and popular music, and classical saxophonists, but I wanted to leave my study open to the extent to which these

traditional associations were still in place, constructing, confirming and contesting conservatoire discourses of purpose. This potential diversity of purpose, all under the banner of either BMus or MMus degrees meant that theoretical quota sampling was the best way of attempting to capture a representative sample of students. Given there are many principal study degree combinations, two genders and six possible year groups, it was beyond the scope of this study to gain access to students in every available degree course across all year groups and in both genders.

There were practical difficulties in accessing some groups. Representatives of the keyboard department (both students and teachers) proved to be particularly difficult to pin down; one declined to be interviewed, another agreed in principle but endlessly deferred agreeing to a date for interview, whilst another arranged an interview, but did not show up at the allotted time; given the quantity and richness of the data I had already collected, I eventually gave up pursuit. Similarly principal study composition and electronic music students were not interviewed, making this study primarily about students on the performance course and the teachers who teach them, though because of a system of elective choices, this did include a music therapy teacher and a composition teacher who taught on undergraduate performance and postgraduate courses.

Of the department I was involved with in my teaching, I invited by email a range of students to take part in a research interview. With departments I had little contact, I asked colleagues and heads of departments for lists of potential participants. Though this could have been a recipe for selecting students with views that most lined up with those of the teachers or with official discourses, through conversation with the teachers about their choices, it became apparent that students were recommended for perceived qualities such as being articulate (and in a college where 40 per cent of students are international, the ability to maintain a conversation in English varies widely), coming from non-traditional backgrounds (for instance, coming to music later in life), because they were going through a period of intense questioning about their studies or career aspirations themselves, or because they were 'nice'. Some teachers also recommended students who had come into postgraduate study from a university

background, or who were not perceived as high achievers in the traditional conservatoire sense of being a virtuoso performer of classical music.

Though gender is not the focus of my study, I encountered an interesting phenomenon amongst male teaching staff; when I asked for a list of students across different years and other teaching staff who I could interview, they invariably gave me lists of male students and teachers. The women teachers that were consulted, however, gave a balanced list of both genders. This led me to return to the male teachers to enquire as to whether there were in fact any women in their departments, after which some female participants were duly produced. Amongst teaching staff, this could reflect that male teachers are a majority in certain departments, for instance, jazz and composition. However, in other departments, and amongst students there is an equal mix which was not initially being acknowledged.

With the professorial staff, similar criteria were in force in the theoretical sampling; namely that both genders, and different departments were represented in the interview participants. Teaching staff did represent different hierarchical layers of institutional management, mostly from middle management down, but my main criteria in inviting them to participate was that they were still engaged in teaching. Though several heads or deputy heads of departments were interviewed as well as part time or hourly paid staff, all of these had significant teaching roles in addition to their administrative positions.

Though I did not aim to interview teacher and student pairs, (and some may have been, though I did not take note of when this happened as it was not relevant to the goal of this research), I decided it was important to include teachers who had contact time with students to see whether the teachers' discourses differed significantly from those of the students, or whether there were points of concordance. With those who did have joint teaching and administrative roles, I hoped to capture any potential array of discourses used by those in different layers of administration, and to move away from the idea of an institution as solely the product of its leaders (c.f. Lancaster, 2006). I wished to see which discourses were filtering in from the bottom – students, and teachers who were working in the profession but taught at the conservatoire for a few

hours a week – to capture any contrast with the official discourses that were disseminated by the managerial administration with the purpose of being adopted throughout the school.

As I did more interviews with teachers, I noticed a common feature; many teachers had themselves been students at the school. Conservatoires employ a high percentage of their former students as teachers; at this particular conservatoire, 128 of the staff, both teaching and administrative, are also known to be alumni, representing nearly a third of the staff in total.

From professional relationships to research interviews: the pilot study

Soon after starting my pilot interviews, which involved only students owing to the practicalities of interviewing during the period of end of year assessment, I realised that it was the process of recontextualisation which had to take place between me, the researcher, and the interview participant that posed important considerations and questions for how the rest of the interviews should be conducted. In my everyday professional relationships with students and colleagues, the boundaries of conduct and dialogue were well established within the prescribed conventions of the conservatoire institutional setting. The requirements of the research interview, by introducing a different context, purpose and dynamic of authority to the encounter, threw this off balance, sometimes into uncharted territory that needed to be renegotiated during the course of the interview. As my pilot interviews progressed, the effect of my own involvement and my dual insider/outsider researcher status became apparent in the data collection process and some of these factors became important enough for me to change my interview methods. With other factors, I decided that similar problems would appear in any research position that I adopted, as they were insoluble problems of the interview format itself, as I discuss below. The best I could do with these factors of potential bias was to be sensitive in my analysis to their existence and their implications.

My influence in the research interview

The factors to do with my status and history as a teacher, and my experiences as a professional musician – all factors *a priori* to the actual interview itself – could have had a bearing on my participants' attitude towards me and thus their responses. Even though I had made the decision not to interview any students who I was teaching at the time of interview to avoid any potential teacher-student dynamics of authority tacitly directing the interview, I realised that my past students could have picked up on my views and the discourses that I constructed, confirmed and contested to talk about the conservatoire. Though this may have been a factor in some of their responses, the six former students who I did interview during the course of the whole study all employed widely differing discourses, as well as ones that at times came close to my own.

As for my status as a teacher, I concluded from my pilot interviews that most students, whether they saw me as a figure of authority or not, demonstrated themselves able to offer views that differed from mine, or to reject questions outright as being irrelevant to their situations. Only one, I speculated, was either mistaken as to the purpose of the research interview or underconfident about his contribution, often adding after his short, terse answers 'Well, what do you think?' This view is in contrast to that of Miller and Baker (2007), a research duo consisting of an insider conservatoire teacher and an independent researcher, who in interviewing students in the conservatoire decided that the external researcher should conduct interviews to avoid students feeling inhibited by perceptions of the interviewer's authority. The difference in my position stems from the nature of my teaching role; I am not a principal study teacher, but a member of academic staff. As such, I do not play an important role in the hierarchy of an institution which foregrounds performance – particularly in the eyes of many students – as evidenced by students that I teach confiding their worries about their principal study teachers to me in tutorial sessions.

Overall, it was my own habitual modes of thinking that seemed to cause the hardest problem: how to leave behind the mindset of a teacher, and edge towards the acknowledged and planned bias that characterises the position of the researcher.

Reflecting on the interview process revealed that the conversational style of interview that I employed with the intention of putting students at ease, sometimes led *me* to adopt a false sense of ease. In one instance, as the participant veered off topic onto the deficiencies of various lecturers and course modules, the inner teacher in me felt compelled to switch the recording off so I could set straight what I considered to be inappropriate views on the nature of teaching at undergraduate level despite attempting to make clear it was not part of the interview or research process. On other occasions, when exasperated with an unresponsive participant, I resorted to explaining popular sides of public debate connected with my research as if I were a teacher instructing a student and asking which they felt the most affinity with, as I well might during a lesson. These were modes of interaction which I made a conscious decision to leave behind with further interviews, though in reading through the transcripts I decided that the localised bias these episodes exerted were not enough to exclude the entire interviews from the final collective data.

Adopting a fresh approach as a researcher also seemed to be a difficulty when not only my familiarity with the institution as a teacher was at stake, but also my own personal history as a music student and as a professional musician. It occurred to me when analysing my interview data that there were many follow up questions I could have asked, but did not, as I presumed I knew what the student was talking about because it appeared to chime with my own past experiences. This willingness to accept statements – conveyed also through positive body language, the nod, or the sympathetic smile – was also part of trying to seem like an insider to facilitate a conversational style of interview. On a personal level, I also wanted to underline and reinforce my own identity as an insider and a musician with the participants I had not met before, perhaps as a result of my perception that students favoured performance over academic work, and therefore would be better disposed towards a musician over a researcher.

In other interviews, I found that continuing to question a student on a particular point, especially when linked to the likelihood of the success of an aspired career also risked stepping beyond the scope of the research interview to one of a therapeutic interview

with its attendant change in the participant's self-identity (Kvale, 1996, 155). Though one student in the final study did remark after an interview had concluded that the experience of reminiscing about his conservatoire experiences had been therapeutic, that had certainly not been the intention of the interview.

On some occasions when I did try to clarify a point that was seemingly self evident to the participants, a shift in perception of me as a researcher occurred. As Kingsbury notes (1988, 17), challenging interviewees on points which are presumed to have an easily shared meaning can change your status from insider to outsider in the eyes of the participant. The categories of insider/outsider also seemed to multiply when interviewing students from the jazz course, who labelled themselves 'jazzers' and classical musicians 'straighties'. In this context, I was clearly 'one of them', rather than 'one of us' – a judgement that I speculated could well have been confirmed in one participant's mind when I had to enquire what frequent use of the word 'street' as an adjective meant to her.

My conclusions as to whether students saw me as an authority, an approachable younger member of staff, someone sympathetic to their views, a boring academic with a clipboard rather than a practising musician, or a 'straighty' set to misunderstand them, was that their reactions to me were not always under my control. Whilst all these factors could lead to certain biases in the data, they were as much owing to the participants as they were to me. These responses were liable to be triggered whether I was seen as an insider or an outsider to the conservatoire culture, as some kind of a response was an unavoidable part of any social interaction. In short, I had limited control over how people decided to 'other' me.

From semi-structured interview to narrative method

Moving from issues of influence in the interview situation, I will now address the interview methods that I used. My first six pilot interviews used a semi-structured method of questioning that allowed latitude to change the wording and order of questions, designed to probe participants' sense of purpose in their conservatoire studies. At this stage, my research focus had not been fixed and I was interested in exploring the relationship between students' career aspirations and why they were at

a conservatoire. What became clear using this method of questioning was that often an implicit meaning was coming across in either the wording or the ordering of my questions, even if a question could be described as an 'open' one that did not require a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

As a result, I found myself often discarding the questions or altering them substantially as they did not apply to what the participant was saying. This was particularly in evidence in the first of the pilot interviews when it became apparent that my linking of a conservatoire education with a career in music was an erroneous assumption which was not shared by the participant. By declaring at the outset that he knew he did not want to be a musician, apparently even when he applied to the conservatoire, a good proportion of my interview schedule was voided as it was geared towards those pursuing a career in music – as every other student I had encountered in my experience as a teacher had professed to wanting.

Similarly, in attempting to ask open ended questions, I found it difficult to use a wording which did not have assumptions embedded into the very core of the question. For instance, the question: 'What skills or qualities do you think you'll need to succeed as a musician?' seemed to pose difficulties both for me, and for participants, in a number of cases. Though I had asked what success might look like to that particular participant, the students were replying with answers such as 'luck'. To my understanding, this did not seem to be either a skill or a quality, in that it is external to a person in a way that a skill or quality is not. I located the difficulty with the fact that there was not a shared meaning between me or the participant of the words 'skill or quality' – which is not surprising, given that terms such as 'skill' are contested and used to construct and confirm a particular official discourse on education as a measure of employability through gaining skills. It appeared that 'skill or quality' was not used by these students' in the same way. I had chosen the words as they were commonly used everyday terms in my role as a teacher, however, I had not, as a researcher stopped to consider any potential difficulties, instead thinking that the commonness of the words would represent a point of understanding between me and the participants. In practice, the unanticipated answers to the questions pointed to the inadequacy of

assuming that official discourses of higher education were equally shared or at least acknowledged by all in the conservatoire environment. This experience led me to adopt my particular analytical strategy in chapter 7.

The final project takes shape; narrative method and research questions

After the first six interviews, three of which saw me deviate significantly from the interview schedule so different were the discourses that were being articulated to those suggested by my interview schedule, I decided to take the unexpected diversity of conservatoire discourses as the subject of my study. To this end, I adopted a narrative method where beyond starting from a desire to explore how people construct the conservatoire, I did not presuppose any of the actual questions, other than one to start the interview, and one to kick start the interview in the event of conversation drying up. These questions were:

‘Can you tell me how you came to be at this conservatoire?’

and

‘If you were in charge of the BMus review that is currently underway, what would you do and why?’

I then based further questions around events and concepts that had been articulated in this opening question, asking participants to elaborate more on their experiences and talk through their decisions. As each interview progressed, I started to test concepts by repeating what participants had told me, using phrases such as ‘My understanding of what you’ve just said is ... ; is this right?’ I also made a conscious decision to use deliberately leading questions (see Kvale, 1996, 286) once we had significantly explored the topic to check the consistency of participants’ statements, and in some cases, this led to refining ideas further as participants disagreed with me in some way, and then articulated a version that they felt summed up more closely what they had meant.

With participants able to explore the subject of the conversation in their own way and using their own words, the narrative interviews lasted longer, typically between 60-75 minutes, as compared to the 40-60 minutes of the semi-structured interview.

Narrative method generated more data that allowed me the scope to explore the diversity of concepts whilst lessening my own input in defining the exact direction of the interview. One of my participants, a teacher, remarked after the recording was switched off that since she could not identify 'the agenda' in my questions, she just answered them as she felt, rather than trying to fulfil or rebel against an answer she thought I might be searching for. In this way, a range of views were constructed and often each interview, beyond having the conservatoire as the field of focus was quite different in its exact course.

My standby question also worked well when it was needed, though sometimes it was not necessary to ask this explicitly, as it had been already addressed. Even though the question was hypothetical rather than based on a story of an experience, a question involving curriculum reform was one which everyone could relate, as all participants had direct experience of the curriculum as it stood. Whilst Hollway and Jefferson counsel against asking participants to engage in conversation about 'imaginary scenarios' (2000, 11) in narrative method, rather than stories that participants claimed to have actually experienced, participants seemed to root their replies on curriculum reform in their experiences of the curriculum. By asking participants to talk about their own experiences or to comment on improvements to current practices, the perception that the research interview was designed to ask participants to solve obscure abstract problems was removed, which in the case of the interviews with teachers seemed to be a significant concern.

My six pilot interviews have been included in this study, as often as not, I jettisoned my semi-structured interview questions as a response to finding my questions inappropriate to the participant in front of me. When I began analysis, I also found that I was able to construct and identify discourses that had been found in the pilot interviews in the main study, so it seemed unnecessary to discount this data.

Interviewing teachers

As with the interviewing of students, there were parallel problems of participants not knowing what to expect in the undefined territory of the research interview. However, what was markedly different, was that many teachers seemed to treat the unknown with anxiety in an outwardly tangible way. From voicing repeated concerns that they may not be able to be of much use at all in their answers, to clamping up once the recording was under way, to trying to analyse the interview process itself during the interview ('Oh! Now I see what you're doing – very clever!'), many teachers – all but one of whom I had met before – treated the interview as if they were being tested in some sort of way. One resorted to humour, bellowing at the outset of every question as one might if one were a game-show host: 'Good Question, Biranda Ford!!!' before going on to answer in a sensible and productive manner.

In another case, a teacher offered me his own seat, to reflect the fact I was now, as interviewer, in a position of authority, and then proceeded to try out every other seat in the room on the grounds that he 'just wasn't comfortable'. I offered him back his own seat, from where he then settled down into the interview, albeit with occasional attempts to read my body language and to interpret my stance as a reaction to something he'd just said. For instance:

T11: [...] Sorry I'm being distracted by something and I won't go down that road It's just that you do what I know I do.

B: Which is?

T11: Well, watch this, if I clench my jaw [demonstrates], you see it's awful, it sticks out, and as soon as I said 'they should be sectioned', you clamped your jaw.

B: Did I?

T11: Hard, and your muscle stuck out and I thought, that's interesting. I've obviously pressed on some nerve there, I wonder what that was? So, it distracted me, so excuse me. [T11: 242-249]

In one interview, I had to resort to asking questions I knew were not related in any way to my research, with the sole aim of letting the normally articulate participant feel comfortable with talking on an area of her expertise in front of the recording machine,

before returning to an area connected with my research. At the end of this interview, I also wondered whether the participant had in fact understood the point of the research interview at all, despite having been through the same procedure of explanation as with any other participant; when I asked if there was anything more to be said, the answer was 'since this is on tape, perhaps you can let them know that there's a problem with the light in room B6....'.

I set up a speculative link that those who were the calmest were the ones who I knew to be engaged in research themselves, so the research interview was not so foreign in purpose or design. With the teachers who seemed to be nervous, I speculated that it was the unknown and ultimately artificial nature of the research interview that they were wary of, be it the process of recontextualisation where I took on another role, to misunderstanding that the interview was designed merely to produce data for me to analyse, not a mode of reporting to superiors what they were up to, or a vehicle for them to offer up a full blown description or analysis that would 'solve' the problem of my thesis, and that I would then pass judgement on.

Conclusions on the interview process with students and teachers

Before interviews began, I had worried about bias working along the lines of students being afraid to answer freely because of a perception of my authority as a teacher, and teacher-colleagues being too informal because of mistaking the interview for a continuation of our normal everyday interaction. However, in practice it was quite different. Another way of thinking about the difference was to speculate that the students, supposedly at the bottom of the institutional hierarchy, had the least to lose by taking part – some even seemed pleased to be allowed an opportunity to 'have their say' – whilst for the teachers there was more at stake. That more teachers also seemed to struggle with the recontextualisation of our normal everyday relationship in the research interview also underlined for me the potential problems of interviewing people you know.

4.6 Ethics

In this section, I discuss some general problems of ethics when conducting insider research in the light of two studies on music in higher education, contrasting the approaches of Kingsbury (1988) and Nettl (1995), before discussing the ethical issues particular to my own research.

Kingsbury's research took place in a single American conservatoire, as ethnographic research over the course of a semester. This involved taking part as a student in lessons as well as interviewing students, teachers and administrators at the same institution. By contrast, whilst Nettl's research forms a commentary on music in university music departments and also professes to be ethnographic research, his observations are generalised and based on personal experience, rather than the systematic treatment of empirical data. Rather than speaking of a specific institution or specific people, Nettl bases his observations on his own experiences of being a musician and teaching in a music department. Of his methodology he says;

My purpose is not to provide hard data about curricula, performances, or personnel. Rather, I would like to impart my personal understanding and reflections on the flavour of the internal interrelationships of the groups of people – and perhaps groups of musics – that constitute and populate music schools. Throughout, I refer to a fictitious "Heartland U.," an abstracted combination of the institutions mentioned earlier. In order to avoid offending the many colleagues, students, and friends from whom I have learned and whom I have observed, I have consciously avoided, most of the time, discussing and naming specific universities, departments, or individuals and have tried to generalize my illustrations (1996, 5).

His aim is not to produce an account 'specific [to] time and places and documented for replication and verification', though he does take into consideration the 'thousands of conversations, [and] counting people in audiences' (ibid, 4-5), inevitably lodged in the memory of the insider researcher. By basing his work on his own recollections, his decisions of selection as to which particular 'data' he uses are not open to scrutiny.

By contrast, Kingsbury's study is run along more familiar ethnographic lines as he speaks of a particular place and documents observations of particular people. He conceals the institution's name by giving it another, however, it is worth noting that

there are only three such institutions that would fit this description, as he describes the institution he conducts his observations at as an independent conservatory on the east coast of the U.S.A. Though he changes all individuals' names, he describes people in a potentially easily identifiable manner through their job titles (e.g. Principal, Student Counsellor) and attributes quotations directly to them. The main problem here is that with a little local knowledge, it could have been easy – particularly at the time of publication – to identify both the institution and the people involved (see Walford, 2005).

Maybe this would not matter if the descriptions generated by the research were favourable, but Kingsbury is often critical of the processes at work in the conservatoire. Though he acknowledges his gratitude to the particular institution of his empirical setting, administrators, students and teachers in being helpful with his research (1988, xi), he does cast individuals in an awkward light. For instance, he points out that a teacher – in a conservatoire! – has problems defining 'music' (ibid, 26-29). Though Kingsbury's purpose is to make a point about the shifting and contingent meaning of the word music, his point is made in this instance by singling out an individual. Whilst his study is more critically incisive than Nettl's generalised observations which can frustrate in their lack of specificity, it is worth considering the ill feeling that can result when participants who voluntarily contributed to the research can identify accounts of themselves that do not cast them in a flattering light (see Kelly, 2009; Walford, 2005, Clough, 2002).¹⁵

Research as representation?

Observation of the academic spat which erupted in the pages of the journal *Ethnomusicology* between Kingsbury and his reviewer, Koskoff, also highlights the lack of control a researcher has in how the research account is read by the wider research community. Koskoff starts her initial review with:

¹⁵ Ill feeling is not only for individual participants; Kingsbury's book, despite being one of the only monographs on the conservatoire, is not listed in the bibliography of the most recent 'Conservatory' entry in the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (Weber, Arnold, Gessele, et al, 2001, vol 6, 320-322), whereas Nettl's book is given a place.

As a performing musician, both trained in a Western school of music, and now on the faculty of one, I first approached Kingsbury's book with a certain 'insider' curiosity, much as I imagine any 'native' does when a description of his or her culture first appears. Would he get it right? Would I recognize myself in his description? Would I be able to identify with the portraits of the students and teachers found here? [...] Would he present a convincing picture of conservatory life? Would it be balanced? (1990, 311)

My concern as a practitioner-researcher is that Koskoff holds onto a singular idea of research as producing a representative account of the empirical world. Is this the only possibility for research, that of producing a universally recognisable representation? What of the goal of providing a new way of seeing or thinking about the empirical world? And where is the acknowledgement that the research account amounts to a re-contextualisation of the world as experienced first-hand and that research itself is necessarily a theorised account? By contrast, when comparing academic educational research to educational practice, Brown and Dowling explain that a research output:

is always an abstraction from the immediate empirical context of the research. Local contingencies are more or less effectively eliminated through definition and/or control, so that the empirical setting is constituted as a laboratory. Research output is, in other words, relatively context-independent, indeed, this is a condition of its generalisability. (2010, 170).

Given Koskoff's expectations for reading research, it seems almost inevitable that she goes on to find the book wanting:

The main problem I had while reading this book was the growing sense that Kingsbury, in his zeal to present the conservat[oire] as a (corrupt?) social system, was going too far [...] Kingsbury uses specific stories to make his points, and all of them are depressing. [...] By the way, what of the favoured students, the ones who the system rewards? Where is the sense of true excitement that comes from executing a difficult passage 'brilliantly', even if the evaluation, 'brilliant' is a matter of social negotiation? [...] He will only truly convince those who know nothing of conservat[oire] life and want to believe the worst, or those musicians who remember their own musical training with resentment and who want, deep down, to settle the score (1990, 314).

By her criticisms, Koskoff shows herself to be heavily invested in the world that is being criticised. Her own negative responses do not seem to have any foundation in critical argument, but seem to centre around her emotional responses to Kingsbury's 'depressing' account. Asking where the descriptions of excitement in playing a brilliant

passage are, seems to miss the point of Kingsbury's book, which is to question how such values come to be held in the first place. She fails to scrutinise the values implicit in her own position.

Kingsbury, by way of reply, defends his position by stating that most his 'depressing' stories came from the successful students who were rewarded by the system, but who subsequently found there was no work for them outside the conservatoire. Attacking the idea of balance or showing 'all sides', Kingsbury deploys Becker's argument that 'balanced accounts in the social sciences are all too often merely veiled admonitions to endorse the status quo' (Kingsbury, 1988, 82). Koskoff replies by claiming that 'I think that it is *only* in looking at (or at least acknowledging) all sides that true understanding, and ultimately change can occur' (1991, 83).

As discussed in both this chapter and the previous one, Koskoff's goal of 'acknowledging all sides' is not feasible as a practical vantage point or as a theoretical position from which to launch enquiry, and what she seems to be advocating is 'acknowledging *my* side'. However, reading these exchanges made me think about my own position as an insider researcher in the conservatoire. The music world has the capacity to excite such heated debate, perhaps because it is a small world of close social networks where everyone seems to know each other, and partly because people tend to stake their identity on their musical practices (deNora, 2000; Schneider, 2010). Netti's position of only talking about generalised reflections in order not to offend anyone certainly seems to have avoided academic confrontation, but I find the lack of concrete examples amounts to an unsatisfactory research account, lacking in detail and subtlety. My own position towards my research is that I would like to have the freedom to pursue reasoned analytical strategies without being held to write a representation of a world which my students and colleagues will then be able to read and identify with a wave of recognition that says 'yes, that is me, I see myself in the pages of this account!'

Though analysis of interviews brings a level of specificity to the research account, I am keen to stress that an important part of my rationale for adopting a discourse analysis approach is to take away ownership of statements from the individuals that produced

them and avoid a 'shame and blame' approach to my account of the material. That my line of enquiry which uses second order observation achieves an ethical stance towards protecting the feelings of my participants as well as constituting my research focus is of double benefit. Though it is of importance where a particular statement that contributes to a discourse appears, as statements are fixed to their context, it is important to note that as the researcher, I am responsible for selecting interview texts to qualify as statements in a particular discourse. That I know that two colleagues who I am friends with and who I know to be friends with each other hold completely opposing and conflicting views should not surface as a personal issue as a result of my research. My theoretical stance on the diminished importance of the individual human subject in determining the content of the research data thus serves an ethical purpose too.

Confidentiality and anonymity

In addition to the above theoretical issues that propose a protective ethical disclaimer for my participants as a consequence of my theoretical stance, my research has further ethical considerations involving confidentiality and anonymity. Using the *BERA Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2004) as a guide, I wrote a consent form (see appendix) promising anonymity and confidentiality would be a condition of participation. Confidentiality emerged as a significant issue for many students who volunteered information about their career aspirations that they did not want their principal study teachers to know about. As I was not interviewing student-teacher pairs, this was easy to accomplish in a practical sense.

In terms of ensuring anonymity for my participants in how I presented the quotations of their texts, more care and consideration was needed to maintain the anonymisation of individuals. Though I have not cited the name of my empirical setting in this research account, the very fact that I have attached my name to it at the same time as documenting my experiences of 'insider research', means that it will take only a minimal amount of sleuth-work to reveal which institution I am writing about. Whilst Walford (2005) contests the BERA guideline's recommendation of anonymity for

institutions on the grounds that it cannot always be upheld, to compensate, I paid particular attention to ensuring the anonymity of participants.

Attention was given to avoid citing text which could easily identify a participant, and care was exercised to remove the name and identifying features of participants, particularly when writing about some principal study disciplines which only have a few students per year, or have a predominance of one gender. For instance, the guitar and harp departments are both very small, and display the gender bias that operates in our society on choice of instrument (Hallam, Rogers, Creech, 2008) so that guitarists are usually male and harpists are usually female. To leave out that a guitar student is male, but to include that the student is an international student, when perhaps he is the only one in a particular year, is not helpful to preserving anonymity. However, in these instances, both guitar and harp students could be described as 'string players', making it harder to identify a particular person, as placing them in the string department would make them one of many.

Student anonymity was also aided by the fact that my research took place over a number of years, thus making the identification of a particular first year interviewed two or maybe three years ago, all the harder. In this respect, more care was taken over teacher anonymity, as they tend to be employed by the school for longer, even if recent restructuring has meant a flurry of new appointments and job title changes. As noted in relation to Kingsbury's research, describing a particular person's job title and gender could make the individual easily identifiable with a little insider knowledge.

As a measure towards making sure participants would feel comfortable participating in an interview, I underlined that participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time without repercussion. At first, I offered to send copies of the transcripts back to participants so they would be given a chance to alter anything they were not comfortable with. This was more a move of courtesy towards the participant than an attempt to try and fix or agree the meaning of the interview transcript. However, in practice, I found after I had sent out 10 transcripts, not one participant appeared to have read them. After this, I discontinued the practice, as the time it took me to make sure a transcript was free from any typing errors could not be justified. However, my

increased realisation of the many differences between my role as a teacher engaged in educational practice, and my role as a researcher engaged in educational research also made me realise that though my interviewees could be cast as participants in the sense that they contributed to the content of the interview, they could not be participants in my data analysis, as they were not party to the decisions in the selections I had made in method, or analytical strategy. As Brown and Dowling bluntly put it, 'research is simply not a democratic activity' (2010, 51). By attempting to make the research interview less risky for participants, with my invitation to participants to edit their own texts, I had inadvertently opened up my research methods to potential conflicts with my conceptual framework by placing participants in partial control of what was included in my work whilst also maintaining that my analysis did not aim to capture any sense of participants as individuals. It was just as well no participant had got back to me after all; I had discovered that the phrase 'informed consent' has limits.

Thus far, I have described my initial motivation for research in chapter 1 and have opened up my empirical field in my literature review. Chapters 3 and 4 have been concerned with negotiating my position as conservatoire insider, with chapter 3 detailing the rationale for my analytical strategies brought to bear on my data, and chapter 4 charting my increasing awareness of the problems my dual role as practitioner-researcher can bring. Having discussed the most pressing issues of method and theoretical framework, I now turn to the construction of discourses in my historical empirical setting.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE HISTORICAL CONSERVATOIRE

5.1 Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to undertake an investigation into the historical antecedents of the modern conservatoire identifying how practical music training changed from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. I aim to focus on the discontinuities of music aesthetics and musical practice which arose around the turn of the nineteenth century and link these changes to a new historical continuity which came into being in the 1800s: the discourse of classical music. This analysis will be used as a basis to observe the construction, confirmation or contestation of discourses in the modern conservatoire in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

The chapter is in three parts; the first part looks at the historical development of the conservatoire in three countries, focusing on the Italian *conservatorii* from which the modern conservatoire derives its name, the Paris conservatoire, the forerunner of today's institutions, and the early London conservatoires. In choosing to focus on these particular institutions, I do not aim to present a comprehensive account of the evolution of every conservatoire, but choose the institutions which firstly demonstrate the performative effects of the discourse of classical music in the conservatoire, and secondly, are the most relevant to the UK focus of this thesis. The second part of the chapter sets the historical development of the conservatoire within an account of the key conceptual fields and objects created by the discourse of classical music such as: 'art for art's sake', abstract music, the work concept and the canon. I argue that the formation of these elements represents a break with eighteenth century discourses of music, and that through their existence they have an observable material effect on conservatoire practices. In the final part of the chapter I demonstrate how the historical development of the conservatoire came to embody the discourse of classical music.

My sources for this historical account are both primary and secondary. Though I rely on existing accounts of the conservatoire rather than going to primary sources gleaned from conservatoire archives, some of these accounts can be said to be contemporary

historical sources. In particular, I have taken texts from the *Grove* series of dictionaries from 1878 to 1904, concentrating on entries under both the generic 'Conservatoire' and specific institutions. The choice of these *Grove* entries as a primary source, though limited, has allowed me to be exhaustively systematic in a small area, rather than piecemeal over a much larger potential range of primary evidence.

I treat these entries not as offering a representation of the way conservatoires were, some of the information now discredited, rather they offer a window into how conservatoires (historical and contemporary) were conceptualised by the authors in their own times, thus offering an insight into strategies used to shape and bring effect to discourse. Though going to primary sources would satisfy Foucault's exhortation to 'read everything' (Foucault, 1998, 298) and would lend a richness of detail to this historical account of music education (see also Cox, 1996), since my study concerns the textual analysis of discourses of purpose surrounding a conservatoire education, the use of secondary accounts in no way compromises my aim. Furthermore, by using a wide range of sources, I have attempted to construct 'the general archive of the period at a given moment' (Foucault, 1998, 298).

Whether there exists a disadvantage in using secondary sources over primary ones is difficult to ascertain. The writing of a historical account is never merely that of reconstructing the past however much that is the well intentioned aim; written history is fundamentally shaped by the author in the choice of sources used, the structuring of the account or the inferences and connections that are drawn. In using secondary accounts, I have been careful to take note of the particular biases and theoretical orientations that influence the author's account. For instance, Ehrlich's history foregrounds a view of the professional musician from the economic perspective of supply and demand in the employment market (1985), Eagleton's Marxist inclinations shape his account of ideology in aesthetics (1990), the latest *Grove* entry on the modern conservatoire is written by an author who was an acting head of a conservatoire at the time of producing the account (Ritterman in Weber, Arnold, Gessele, et al, 2001, vol 6, 320-322). My reliance on secondary sources has perhaps resulted in an account which I have constructed and shaped as much as my sorting

through a wider range of primary sources would have entailed, however, it does not allow for the discovering of new primary evidence that would make my account substantively different from the others which already exist. My contribution with this chapter instead lies in my interpretation of accounts of the historical conservatoire in the light of accounts of music aesthetics to determine the discursive effects the latter had on a conservatoire education; this much is original.

5.2 The Conservatoire Story

There have been schools which offered tuition in music since medieval times. The earliest such examples were church Song Schools which taught liturgical chant as a system of preservation and dissemination before notation was widespread (Rainbow, 2006, 29). By 1600, other subjects such as 'reading, writing, rhetoric and literature' were also taught to a greater degree alongside music. For secular music, children were trained in their own families, usually for the purpose of providing an income for their parents in their old age, though apprenticeships and guilds also contracted children as young as eight years old to train them to perform to earn money. Once pupils were trained, teachers would also manage their student's performance engagements, taking a cut from their protégés salaries for doing so (Weber et al, 2001, vol 6, 311).

Secular music began to be offered in schools from the late fifteenth century, when according to humanist views, music could fulfil a social and educational role. Taking the lead from Plato, the humanist Alberti (1404–72) said: 'if I had children of my own, I would have them learn not only languages and history but singing and instrumental music, together with a full course of geography and mathematics'. The emphasis was on practical rather than theoretical music, but it seems that students were intended to learn music as part of a general education, rather than with any vocational intent (ibid).

Conservatorii

The first schools which catered for the musician who made money from music were the Italian *conservatorii*, from which the modern conservatoire derives its name.¹⁶ The name *conservatorio*, meaning ‘place of safe-keeping’, has been acknowledged to refer to the origins of these institutions as state sponsored orphanages (Taruskin, 2005, vol 2, 140; Odam, 2005, 16). Children were made to pay their way in the poor house by being given musical tuition which enabled them, initially as choirboys, to make money from performing outside the institution. Originating in Venice, and copied in Naples by the late sixteenth century, *conservatorii* produced musicians who later came to perform both sacred and secular music whenever required for a public or religious event.

The institutions took on more teachers, and in doing so, became increasingly renowned for their musical tuition. This comprised of musicianship, composition, singing, and in the case of the Venetian *ospedali* which trained women, learning to play *all* the instruments owned by the institution, and receiving specialist private tuition on up to two instruments, along with additional lessons on copying music manuscripts (Baldauf-Berdes, 1993, 129; see also Arnold, 1965). The level of all-round musicianship achieved in these schools was of high renown (Rainbow, 2006, 119, 124). Still needing a way to meet the costs of running the orphanages, from the 1670s they took on fee paying students to subsidise the free tuition for orphans (Baldauf-Berdes, 1993, 4). Expansion meant that *conservatorii* came to occupy the forefront of musical life in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century Italy, as the musicians they trained – including castrati – went on to become the principal performers of a new style of opera in Venice and later to great success, in Naples.

In many cases the *conservatorii* also engaged as music directors and later instrumental teachers, musicians who could compose (Arnold, 1965). These composers wrote opera for the local theatres and the musical life of Venice and Naples as well as the religious oratorios which were thought more appropriate for *conservatorii* use; Vivaldi’s

¹⁶ I refer to geographical area here; Italy was not recognised as a unified nation state until the nineteenth century.

engagement at a girl's orphanage in Venice as the *maestro di violin* in 1704 is one such example of a composer teacher (Pincherle, 1938; Talbot, 1978, 42). Through employing musicians and composers who were responsible for creating new styles of opera, popular at the time, one can speculate that the *conservatorii* appeared to have a direct relationship between supply and demand of new music and musicians in the musical life of the times. In this respect, the Italian *conservatorii* differed from music tuition of previous centuries in that they came to teach their students to participate in musical life both inside and outside the institution – be it secular or sacred – and as salaried musicians.¹⁷ Falling into disrepair by the end of the century through a combination of mismanagement of funds and internal bickering (Weber et al, 2001, vol 6, 313), these Italian *conservatorii* are best not described as the direct descendants of today's conservatoires, despite lending us their name.

5.3 Paris Conservatoire

Instead, commentators have preferred to cast the Paris *Conservatoire* as the 'prototype' (Corbet, 1975, vol 2, 411) for the modern day institution. Formed in 1795 by national order as a state sponsored 'free school of music' (Chouquet, 1878, vol 1, 391), it has been described as 'a special kind of institution offering musical education in all its branches' (Corbet, 1975, vol 2, 411). Like the Italian *conservatorii*, the Paris *Conservatoire* also made its mark on the musical life of its times, but where we are left with the image of the Italian schools producing and supporting local music and opera which spread to be popular over a wide geographical area and time-span, the Paris *Conservatoire's* reach and influence, though equally wide-ranging, was in instigating a system of music education that still exists in conservatoires throughout the world and cultivating attitudes towards music that are familiar to us today.

Paris Curriculum

So what went on at the Paris *Conservatoire*? Though early accounts find the breadth of musical education on offer at the *Conservatoire* wanting (Rainbow, 2006, 218), by the

¹⁷ Though the women that the Venetian *Ospedali* trained were barred from pursuing careers as freelance musicians, they earned dowries, which meant they could marry, and 'financial rewards and retirement benefits for prescribed work as church musicians.' (Baldauf-Berders, 1993, 3).

time Gustave Chouquet as ‘Keeper of the Museum’ at the *Conservatoire* gave a detailed description in the first edition of Grove’s *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1878), his account is keen to stress the rigour of the studies. Entrance of students from age 8 to 22 – both girls and boys – was by examination and at the time of writing, it was reported to have at least 600 pupils and ‘auditeurs’ (Chouquet, 1878, vol 1, 393). The curriculum comprised of *solfeggio* ear training, both in classes of four students and individual classes for all, and for singers, vocal tuition and harmony, study of part writing and lyrical declamation for opera and opera-comique. Unlike the Italian *conservatorii*, instrumental tuition was given in only a specialist instrument, be it piano or the orchestral woodwind and string instruments including harp, and also horn, cornet and trombone. Practical classes included chamber music, organ improvisation and orchestral composition and additional studies were provided in harmony, composition, counterpoint and fugue, general history of music, grammar, prosody and elocution, dramatic declamation, stage deportment and fencing. Each student was expected to pass through a tripartite system with an emphasis on ear-training in the first year, instrumental studies in the second, and theory and history in the third. Classes took place on a regular, timetabled basis with proscribed practice hours and pupils were expected to pass two exams each academic year, and participate in public performances. There was also a competition at the end of each academic year, to which students were entered if they met the required entry level criteria. Demonstrating the high value placed by the state on a *Conservatoire* education, Chouquet reported;

The competitions in singing, opera, opera-comique, tragedy, comedy, and instrumental music are held publicly in the large concert-room. The distribution of prizes follows, under the presidency of the Minister of Public Education and Fine Arts (ibid).

Paris Concerts

The ‘large concert-room’ of the *Conservatoire* was Paris’s first purpose-built public concert hall, opened in 1811 with a capacity of 1055 seats. Prizewinners had been asked to give annual public concerts from the inception of the *Conservatoire*, but students’ concerts came into their own from 1800, with up to twelve concerts taking

place each year, of orchestral music. An orchestra made up of both students and teachers played pieces by French, German and Italian composers, as well as student compositions. Various concert series were set up such as the *Société du Concerts du Conservatoire* (1828), and later the *Société des Jeunes Artistes du Conservatoire* (1852), and these were influential both in making the public concert series a familiar component of the music world, and in the repertoire performed, which was a mixture of new works by young French composers, and increasingly works both old and new by Austrian or German composers such as Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Mendelssohn. Though the *Conservatoire* also trained singers for the opera houses that remained an important cultural institution in France throughout the nineteenth century, the training of skilled orchestral players was seen as a chief accomplishment of the *Conservatoire* in its early days and was a key difference from the Italian *conservatorii* which aimed primarily to supply the opera theatres of Venice and Naples with singers (Anderson, Payne, Hertz et al, 2001, vol 19, 108).

Regulation: Libraries, Museums, Manuals And Codification

Another discontinuity of practice between the Italian *conservatorii* and their successor was that Principals of the Paris *Conservatoire* instigated lasting strategies for recording and regulating *Conservatoire* practices. Chouquet identified a further achievement of the conservatoire when he wrote that the students, ‘besides their regular studies, have the advantage of an extensive library and a museum of musical instruments’ (1878, vol 1, 393). It was in 1834 that under Cherubini’s leadership, Chouquet informs us, ‘the library acquired the right to one of the two copies of every piece of music or book upon music which authors and composers are compelled to de-posit with the *Ministre de l’Interieur*’ (ibid). The musical instrument museum followed in 1864. Though the Italian *conservatorii* kept libraries of music and instruments, they seemed to have done so either as part of a general collection, which included painting and sculpture designed to increase the political prestige of the institution (Baldauf-Berdes, 1993, 2), or for the students to use and perform with (Talbot, 1978, 44), rather than as a need to record musical culture. Chouquet praises Cherubini for his ‘strictness of rule and his profound knowledge [...]. In short, during his long administration he neglected no means of raising the tone of the studies of the Central Conservatoire, and extending its

influence' (ibid, 392). The Conservatoire, however, had its critics. Liszt, for example in 1835 referred to the place as a 'rest home for mummies' (cited in Rainbow, 2006, 218), pointing to the institution's conservatism tendencies.

One such method of extending influence beyond the walls of the institution was through publication. All teachers were required to publish their teaching manuals; 'the *Méthodes du Conservatoire* prepared under the supervision of Catel, Méhul, Rode, Kreutzer and other eminent professors' (Chouquet, 1878, vol 1, 392) meant that all professors in the school could use the same teaching material, thus leading to common standards being established and maintained in instrumental and vocal technique, and musicianship. In composition too, some of the most influential manuals on composition were written at this time for students in the Paris conservatoire. Anton Reicha's *Traite de haute composition musicale* in 3 volumes (1824-6) came to define the theoretical model for sonata form derived from the study of works by composers of the First Viennese School, namely, Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven. Though composers had written instrumental music on which Reicha had based his theoretical model for some seventy years prior to this, Reicha's theory and others that wrote on the subject afterwards, notably A.B. Marx for Berlin University (in four volumes from 1837-47), set out an idealised structure for sonata form that became a dominant model for any aspiring composer of instrumental music in the nineteenth century. As well as producing an *ex post facto* theorisation of a structural form for the instruction of students, Reicha's manual worked to equate the notion of *haute* – or 'high' – with a certain type of Austro-German instrumental music.

These manuals for instruction produced by the *Conservatoire*, both practical and theoretical, were used outside of Paris too; the *Conservatoire* came to acquire five regional music schools during the nineteenth century, in Lille, Toulouse, Dijon, Nantes and Lyon, all of which were regularly inspected by envoys from the main Paris school. Its influence spread yet further when French cultural enterprises such as the Prix de Rome, the prestigious composition prize set up by order of Napoleon, was administered by the school during the Second Empire. Such prizes, were awarded on the basis of knowledge of music as a 'science' by testing traditional and highly rule

bound methods of composition such as harmony, counterpoint and fugue, and as an art, by locking composers away for weeks at a time to compose an opera scene for voice and orchestra to a given text (Gilbert, 2001, vol. 20, 387). Another example of regulation can be found in Chouquet's account of the fixing of pitch to a uniformly agreed standard, which he attributes to a declaration in 1859 by the Paris *Conservatoire* that A should be set at 870 Hz, in an attempt to end regional differences whereby the pitch of A varied according to local practice (1878, vol 2, 393).

Taken together, the new expanded curriculum made up of musicianship, practical and theoretical studies, the library of accepted works, the museum of instruments, the publication of technical and composition manuals, the competitions which favoured certain criteria in musical taste and values, all created new standards and methods of regulating musical life both within the institution, and with greater reach, outside it. The move towards regulation can be said to have had two effects, one with regard to preserving that which was considered important for posterity, the other with regard to shaping the present. In terms of creating something to be preserved for posterity, the *Conservatoire* with its library, museum and publications represented a break with the institutional practices of the Italian *conservatorii* which appear to have been concerned with an immediate contemporary need to provide an income for the orphanages or to cater for the musical life of Venice and Naples.

The Paris *Conservatoire* also seems to have met similar contemporary concerns; on a local level it catered for much the same need as the Italian *conservatorii* in that it supplied qualified singers for the opera houses. In addition, the *Conservatoire* catered for a new need which grew stronger during the nineteenth century for orchestral musicians. But aside from fulfilling a simple brief to meet the supply for skilled musicians in contemporary music making, the Paris *Conservatoire* fulfilled wider political aims; as part of the revolutionary, and after 1802, Napoleonic imperial drive, the French state had plans for the Paris *Conservatoire* model to be rolled out to the country as a whole and to newly conquered terrain. Music, via its preservation and propagation through education was to be used to political ends. This new model found resonance all over Europe and was widely admired; in 1802, H.C. Koch the German

theorist, when writing of the Paris Conservatoire in his *Musikalisches Lexikon* (2001), praised the role of the French state in its commitment to music education, and conservatoires subsequently multiplied throughout Europe, either on a privately funded basis as in the Prague conservatoire opening in 1811, or as funded by the state as in Berlin in 1822 (Weber et al, 2001, vol 6, 316; Rainbow, 2006, 217).

5.4 London: from Nationalism to Regulating Teachers

In England there had been calls since the eighteenth century for a music school to be opened in London based on the Italian *conservatorio* model after Charles Burney toured Italy, however, these plans did not come to any fruition. This is perhaps surprising given that London employed up to 1500 musicians by the mid-eighteenth century (Ehrlich, 1985, 3). However, Daniel Defoe writing earlier in 1728 provides a clue as to the provenance and training of these musicians when he wrote a piece entitled: 'Proposal to prevent the expensive Importation of Foreign Musicians, etc., by forming an Academy of our own' (ibid, 9). It seems that the vast majority of professional musicians working in London had been trained on the continent and Ehrlich cites the low social status of the professional musician in England in the eighteenth century and the existing mode of education being on an ad hoc family basis or through apprenticeship, as reasons for forestalling the setting up of a formal institution for the training of home students (ibid, 3).

Though the Royal Academy of Music was founded in 1822, in contrast to the Paris *Conservatoire*, it initially did not achieve any great effect outside its own walls. This has been attributed to a string of ineffectual aristocratic leaders and an absence of state funding. After lurching between multiple management and financial crises (see Barclay Squire, 1898, 185-187; Ehrlich, 1985, 82-87) it was forced to serve the wider population in order to secure government money, which was granted in 1868. Ehrlich (ibid, 84) distinguishes both the Paris and Leipzig conservatoires, run by Cherubini and Mendelssohn respectively, as belonging to a different league from the Royal Academy. This he attributes primarily to the musical and managerial accomplishments of their directors who were both acclaimed composers, and who oversaw the creation and

maintenance of influential musical standards used throughout their institutions and beyond. As such, both institutions attracted students from abroad. The Royal Academy, however, pursued Defoe's xenophobic commitment to only accepting English students. However, contemporary accounts suggest that foreign students may not have been so attracted to the training on offer; Ehrlich cites an 1830's eyewitness account of Academy students practising simultaneously in an 'incessant jangle' on 20 keyboards in the same room (ibid, 84). The curriculum was less than rigorous by continental standards too; according to the witness, there were only two eighteen minute lessons per week with an emphasis on vocal and keyboard tuition, bulked out with religious studies and 'moral guidance' (ibid).

The failure of the Academy to make any real difference to English musical life until the 1870's led to public and royal calls for the formation of the National Training School for Music in 1876, and when this too failed, the Royal College of Music in 1882. With both, there was a sense that a school was needed to fulfil a similar function to the Paris and Leipzig conservatoires, so that indigenous musical talent could be nurtured and local musicians could supply the job market. However, despite the nationalist sentiments of those setting up the conservatoires, state funding was not behind the projects as it was in Paris, and English conservatoires ended up taking a different route from those on the continent in a number of respects to achieve funding stability, mainly by capitalising on the increased demand for musical tuition amongst the general public in the latter part of the nineteenth century (ibid, 99).

The market for amateur music multiplied as cheaper instrument production meant that the piano became *the* aspirational acquisition for every middleclass home with an estimated two to four million pianos in Britain (ibid, 120). Lack of state funding, along with a high demand for vocal and piano tuition (Weber et al, 2001, vol 6, 318) meant that the conservatoires took in any pupils who wanted to learn. Accounts emphasise that these students were regarded as amateurs rather than potential professionals. Whilst some students at the Royal College of Music were accepted on a scholarship basis through public audition, the majority were fee paying amateurs. Fuller Maitland in his 1904 *Grove* articles reports there were 67 scholars to 352 fee paying students at

the Royal College (vol 4, 173), whilst the Guildhall School of Music, set up by the Corporation of London in 1880 was reported to have over 3000 students, mostly amateurs (vol 2, 259). If the numbers of the Guildhall School seem excessive, in London alone, there were 33 conservatoires by the beginning of the twentieth century, with the majority of students made up of middleclass girls and women (Ehrlich, 1985, 114-115) who were taking part in a 'seemly' feminine pastime. Those who took on any kind of professional work after their studies were more likely to do so as piano teachers rather than freelance professional performers owing to social codes that made it more acceptable for women to become home or school based teachers rather than roaming public performers. It was not until the 1930s that this popularity for music tuition declined amongst the general public, leaving conservatoires to shift their focus once more, onto the training of professionals (Weber et al, 2001, vol 6, 318).

Amateurs and Professionals, Pianos and Orchestral Instruments

Whilst diplomas and certificates earned for performance and theory conferred respectability upon these students who could then set themselves up as teachers in a profession with an otherwise low social bearing, they also brought in revenue for the colleges that issued them. The amateur music movement, combined with a Victorian belief that formalised education leading to a qualification was a 'good thing' even meant that some unscrupulous 'conservatoires' – for instance, London's 'Victoria Conservatoire' – sold certificates without supplying any tuition (Ehrlich, 1985, 43). If the Paris *Conservatoire* busied itself with creating and maintaining standards for its own students and those in its affiliated schools, then in England, the new examination system was notable for testing not just students within conservatoires, but for anyone who chose to enter themselves in for examination whether they attended a conservatoire or not.

London's Trinity College of Music hosted the first successful set of exams in the 1870s and these were soon rolled out to British colonies such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa so that tens of thousands of candidates were being examined every year. Ehrlich reports that 'by 1913, Trinity College was dealing with about 28,000 students a year, and had examined more than 500,000 since its

inception' (ibid,118). A 1904 Grove article on the formation of another exam body, the Associated Board of Music, informs us:

For many years, the Royal Academy of Music held Local Examinations throughout the kingdom, which were popular and lucrative. In order, however, to raise the standard of these examinations and assist the public towards the elimination of defective instruction in music, the Royal Academy of Music entered into negotiations with the Royal College of Music for combined action in the matter (Barclay Squire and Corder, 1904, vol 4, 172).

This *Grove* extract is of note in that the public are being protected not from poor quality *performers*, but from 'defective' *teachers*, indicating that these examinations were mainly seen as a way of regulating the music teaching profession rather than the music performance profession. A closer look at the lists of entered candidates for these exams reveals that most of the candidates were also female (Ehrlich, 1985, 118), another sign that the exams worked to regulate those who might become teachers rather than performers.

In terms of supply and demand, the colleges were providing a supply of mainly piano teachers to meet the demands of a public eager to have lessons and, to this end, the conservatoires could be seen to be performing a useful public function. However, there is much rhetoric at the time criticising the conservatoires for not training their students to be good enough to be professional performers. For instance, J.H. Mapleson opined in 1888 that 'except among the richer classes almost everyone who studies music ends by teaching music to someone else. Such is his fate whatever may have been his ambition' (ibid, 297), thus creating a hierarchy of musical activity, with teaching coming out rather worse than performing.

With the increasing professionalization of musical life that took place throughout Europe in the nineteenth century, there was a growing call for English conservatoires to produce skilled performing musicians capable of playing orchestral or virtuoso repertoire, not 'merely' becoming teachers. Whereas children as young as eight were admitted to the first conservatoires in Paris and London, preparatory or amateur divisions were later created in the UK in response to a keener sense of the division between 'amateur' and 'professional' that had developed during the nineteenth

century in music (Rainbow, 2006, 221) and the professions as a whole, so that the main school could teach those old enough to gain employment when they left. In turn, raised standards of playing required students to be trained and notions of professionalism came with an expectation of earning a salary as an outcome of a conservatoire education, demonstrated by Fuller Maitland's 1904 *Grove* account of the Guildhall School:

A very large staff of professors is at present employed in teaching the students, who number nearly 3000. Those who anticipate future financial disaster for the individual performers turned out in such quantities, may be consoled by the knowledge that the teaching of amateurs has always been considered an important branch of the school's work; one of its main objects is the diffusion of musical knowledge throughout the people at large, not merely the special training of public performers (vol 2, 258-259).

By negative inference, Fuller Maitland equates those who are not amateur – the professional public performers – with financial gain.

'Higher Forms of Art'

However, when teaching standards did rise at the Royal College, and the number of scholarship students increased, complaints were made that a glut of musicians had flooded the job market (Ehrlich, 1985, 112-113). The composer Stanford complained on behalf of the 'shoals of artists, the majority of whom find, when they have completed their pupilage, that they have no outlets for their talents' (ibid, 113). But it seems that the perceived problem was not just to do with a simple matter of supply and demand. Though the need for performers increased rapidly during the period of 1870-1910 in Britain to meet a public appetite for music in theatres, music halls and public concerts before the age of recording could dispense with live musicians (Philip, 2004, 4), not all forms of employment were viewed in the same light, and this was not just linked to money earned on the job. The music critic H.C. Colles looking back on this boom in training at the end of the 1920s said;

Composers, pianists, organists, singers, and orchestral players were, and still are, turned out in large numbers to earn their living by teaching others, by playing in theatre bands, restaurants, and later in cinemas, by anything but those higher forms of art for which they had been trained, often at the public expense (ibid).

It becomes clear that 'earning a living' is not at issue, but rather the perceived respectability of the work undertaken. Rather than aiming to supply the music profession in all its possible permutations, Colles only deems it a good use of public money if musicians can perform 'the higher forms of art', invoking Reicha's notion of *haute composition musicale* from a century earlier in France.

The links between Colles and Reicha's attitudes were not coincidental; Reicha's notion of high art was based around music of the Austro-German tradition, and whilst the Royal Academy had opened with a remit to have its students play contemporary English music, the Royal College from its inception took as its mission the training of students to play the Austro-German repertoire of canonical instrumental works (Weber et al, 2001, vol 6, 319). Orchestral training featured more prominently. Here, the Royal College came closest to the European conservatoires on which it was modelled. In a bid to raise standards, eminent names were recruited from the continent as examiners, for instance virtuoso violinists, Ysäye from Belgium and Joachim – who had a direct link with Brahms – from Germany (Ehrlich, 1985, 112). Ehrlich approvingly reports that the first concert consisted of 'reputable works' including a Haydn string quartet, and performances of Wagner orchestral works and Mozart opera followed in subsequent years (ibid, 113). The mission to support British or new music was gradually dropped throughout all UK conservatoires into the early twentieth century. Instead, the aim became to achieve the 'highest standards' with appeal to an international cast of professors and students playing international repertoire, or rather, that from a mainly Austro-German canon, which was adopted on an international basis at conservatoires around the world.

Summary

While the French and English conservatoires aimed, as the Italian *conservatorii* did, to train musicians to work in the music profession, there was a notable shift in music education practice in the nineteenth century to encompass a regulating function, whereby standards were imposed and systems for their maintenance were put into place. In France, this manifested itself in a drive to raise the technical standards of performance, with the publication of pedagogy and composition manuals and the

instigation of regular exams to monitor the progress of conservatoire students. By contrast, in England, a zealous mission to create and administer examinations amongst teachers and the general public at home and abroad was born, though this was undertaken against a background critique informed by notions of high art, that conservatoires should be training students to perform art music professionally, not to teach.

With conservatoires functioning as public institutions, often tied to the state through funding, they were also affected by the political and cultural needs of government and society in a much more direct way than when music education was undertaken informally or through apprenticeships. Most conservatoires in Europe responded to the call of nationalism, with, for instance, the Paris conservatoire being championed by the state to fulfil its role in public cultural life and those of conquered territories. Whilst a kind of nationalism manifested itself in the Royal Academy's remit to train and support English students and new music, this was replaced later by the Royal College's adoption of the core repertory of the Austro-German tradition, a feature shared by all conservatoires by the end of the nineteenth century.

Through the history I've traced of the early conservatoires, it is possible to find the creation of various categories of thinking about music and musicians that occurred between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Presented as opposing pairs, these could be categorised as: conservatoires as a way of safeguarding music for posterity versus conservatoires for the immediate needs of the contemporary music world; correct instruction versus defective instruction; professional versus amateur; performing versus teaching; high art versus low art.

To find out what contributed to these changes, the next section of this chapter will explore the formation of aesthetic thought in the nineteenth century to identify the philosophical concepts which drove the new discourse of classical music which came to be embodied in the practice of the new conservatoires. I will then go on to show how this discourse, mostly German in origin, came to assert its cultural hegemony throughout Europe through education.

5.5 Nineteenth Century Music Aesthetics and the Discourse of Classical Music

The Role of Aesthetics in European Thought

Why are aesthetics important to the conservatoire story? The formation of the modern conservatoire could well be contextualised through an account of European cultural imperialism, or through an account of the creation of the professions during the nineteenth century. However, this would only give a partial picture and I argue instead that aesthetics play a central role in European thought, contributing towards cultural imperialism and the professionalisation of musical life. Through the development and widespread influence of general aesthetic concepts such as art for art's sake, and the music-specific concepts of abstract music, the work-concept and the canon, musical life in the nineteenth century took on a new direction, including the new education provided by conservatoires. By way of articulating the influence of aesthetics on conservatoire formation in the nineteenth century, I first look at how the aesthetic came to achieve its position of general importance in European thought before looking at the music specific aesthetic ideas that mark music out as different from other arts and which influenced ideas on music education.

That aesthetics could have achieved such an influence in society as a whole rather than being seen as a peripheral concern in European thought might at first seem an over-confident claim. Eagleton (1990, 2) notes the dominance of aesthetic questions in European philosophy since the Enlightenment, whilst also asking why other branches of philosophy such as politics and ethics failed to eclipse matters aesthetic. His Marxist reading posits that aesthetics took root in European thought as it stood for important issues that were at the centre of middle-class struggles for power. At a time when old social orders such as feudal orders and princely rights were destabilising and crumbling, aesthetics became a forum for debating concepts such as 'autonomy, particularity, universality, spontaneity and necessity, freedom and legality' amongst the expanding bourgeoisie (ibid, 3). The development and prevalence of aesthetics achieved a material effect in three important respects in the newly established social order: in creating a notion of subjecthood amongst individuals, in holding together the

social life of the new social orders and in bringing about the severance of the arts from their place in court and church.

Eagleton sees the rise of aesthetics as a way of creating a notion of subjecthood in a changing world where the collapse of feudalism and political absolutism threatened to destabilise social cohesion (ibid, 14-24). Though the newly emerging discipline of economics was just beginning to gain ground, it offered an abstract and impersonal way of talking about people and the relations between them. By contrast, aesthetics was much more accessible, Eagleton argues, offering a conceptual route for people to exist in a world of visceral sensations and individual perception. The notions of subjectivity offered by the aesthetic enabled a way of holding society together in the absence of political absolutism, where people could have both an individual response to art and participate in a shared response (see also Taruskin, 2005, vol 3, 62).

This shared response also enabled social life to be regulated through the arts; the nineteenth century became the age of public spaces constructed for the collective experience of the arts, of concert halls and art galleries, where art was put on display with no other purpose other than to experience and admire it. The civilising effects of the arts through the affective sensibilities which they invoked embodied a certain set of socially recognised and sanctioned responses. These in turn had a regulatory effect on those who participated in them and thus society as a whole (Dahlhaus, 1989, 4-5; Eagleton, 1990; Weber, 1992). It is no accident that women were the chief recipients of music education with a view to playing the piano in the domestic sphere rather than travelling the land as freelancers in concert halls and theatres.

‘Art for Art’s Sake’

Though Eagleton positions art as providing a suitable way for people in society to firstly, cohere whilst also signalling their independence, and secondly, to be inculcated into dominant moral values, in writings on aesthetics of the period, art was not represented as such. Instead, art was seen to take on a life of its own free from society. Though artists were free of church, court and state, they still operated within society and were now subject to the marketplace. Instead of being recognised as such in aesthetics, art came to be positioned as altogether independent of the social,

political and economic, existing prior and separately to the world and people in it. The influential writer Moritz made an important distinction between non-art and art when he wrote in the late 1780s that objects which were 'merely useful' needed human interaction to fulfil their purpose. Art, however;

constitutes a whole in itself, and gives me pleasure for the sake of itself, in that I do not so much impart to the beautiful object a relationship to myself, but rather impart to myself a relationship to it (Dahlhaus, 1989, 5).

The result of this rubbing out of the social, political and economic world in how art was conceived was the famous nineteenth century slogan 'art for art's sake' of which Moritz's writings formed the foundations. Though musicologist Dahlhaus cautions against sweeping statements linking the other-worldliness of art to a backlash against bourgeois values, on the grounds that bourgeois values were not a fixed set of attributes but went through various permutations over time (ibid, 4), he sees it as appropriate to find in Moritz's conception of art an 'urge to escape into aesthetic contemplation from the world of bourgeois work and life that he found oppressive' (ibid, 5).¹⁸ There were widespread effects of positioning art as 'for itself' too. Eagleton suggests that the independence of art led to the masking of the realities of commodification of the art object itself, precisely at the point in history where it became the most subject to the contingencies of the marketplace (1990, 368), whilst Taruskin argues that art became 'newly sacralised' and that like religion, art was positioned as above the reaches of the mortal world (2005, vol 2, 650).

Abstract Music

Moritz's 'art for art's sake' was initially applied to the arts in general and went through various permutations before its meaning settled with regard to music (Dahlhaus, 1989, 4-7). But when it did settle, it brought into being a new concept, that of 'abstract music', that is music which because it is instrumental rather than vocal was seen to make no reference to anything outside itself. Since Plato, music had been thought about as consisting of three elements, *harmonia* (relating to pitch), *rhythmus* (relating

¹⁸ See Dahlhaus for differences in eighteenth century bourgeois values on art (art as representing moral codes found in society) and bourgeois nineteenth century values (art as separate from society) (1989, 4-5).

to rhythm) and *logos* (relating to language). Whereas we now think of vocal music as words set to music – or put another way, as an extramusical element brought together with music – until the seventeenth century, words were vital to the idea of music: ‘music’ meant ‘vocal music’. When composers started writing music for instruments only, without voices to sing words, the resulting music was seen as deficient. Sulzer, author of a *General Theory of Fine Arts* showed disdain disguised as faint praise when he describes instrumental music as;

presented merely as entertainments and perhaps for practice in playing.... Concertos, symphonies, sonatas and solos, [which] ... generally present a lively and not unpleasant noise, or a civil and entertaining chatter... (Dahlhaus, 1989, 4).

Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, a twin conception of music came to exist, that one type had words and that the other did not, with the two types vying for supremacy in music aesthetic thought (ibid, 9). That instrumental music emerged as the more valued concept in the first half of the nineteenth century, owes its success to the mapping of the concept of instrumental music onto the doctrine of ‘art for art’s sake’. Rather than being seen as incomplete because of a lack of words, instrumental music’s meaning was now held to be embodied in its own structure and form (ibid). Instead of representing something outside the artwork, as a painting or poem might do, music’s content was taken to be immanent and thus free from any worldly source.

It was this apparent ‘subjectlessness’ which made instrumental music attractive to philosophers in the second half of the nineteenth century who accorded it the ultimate position in romantic metaphysical thought of being ‘pure’ or an ‘intimation of the infinite’ (ibid, 14). Shifting away from the idea that the bourgeois subjectivity afforded by art was all about the emotions of the composer or the listener, abstract music, or ‘absolute music’ as it was also known, became a link to the Absolute (God). Through the writings of Schopenhauer whose ideas were later more famously taken up by Nietzsche and Wagner, music was thought to express the ‘essence’ of things, as opposed to the language of concepts that ‘cleaved to mere appearances’ (ibid, 10). What began as an escape from the oppressive codes of bourgeois life with the call ‘art for art’s sake’, ended in the championing of instrumental music as a quasi-spiritual experience.

The Work Concept: Music as Product

Though Dahlhaus is persuasive in his argument that absolute music represents a major shift in the conceptualisation of music in the nineteenth century, there is another shift in musical thought which also occurred at the same time, which had an equally resounding impact on music and musicians: what Goehr calls the work concept (Goehr, 2007). It too can be seen in Moritz's writings on art (see Moritz quoted from Dahlhaus, 1989, 5, above), in his characterisation of art as a 'beautiful object'. Though thinking of art as an 'object' may seem like a natural move for painting or sculpture, art forms where the outcome is a physical object, in music, a performance art, the 'object' is less clear, not appearing to reside in any of the obvious areas such as 'the score' (Cook, 2000, 51-73). Instead, music comes into being through the actions of an intermediary: the performer.

Music took on a conceptual shift from being an activity that was realised through the actions of the performer, to being seen as a pre-conceived product. Pre-nineteenth century, the performer was accorded a much greater role in how a composition sounded in performance as the composer's score was seen as a set of incomplete instructions that the performer added his knowledge of performance and stylistic conventions to realise (much like someone making a speech from notes). Post 1800, when the work concept took effect, music came to be viewed as emanating entirely from the composer. A musical work did not exist before the composer composed it, and precisely because it was viewed as the 'original, unique product of a special, creative activity' (Goehr, 2007, 2), the role of the performer became that of divining exactly what the composer was trying to convey and then conveying it in the most accurate way. In changing music from activity to product, the composer's voice became paramount and the performer's role became that of interpretation pressed into the service of reproduction.

The performer's place as distinctly beneath the composer's was also confirmed by a set of conventions surrounding performance that were invented to make the performer into a faceless distributor; Wagner, for instance, was the first to place the orchestra in a custom built theatre pit and the audience in a darkened hall, so the

music of the lofty master could emerge as if by divine will without the distraction of having to look at the actual people producing the sound. Cook comments on the traditional tailed evening dress of classical musicians as being reminiscent of waiters in upmarket restaurants, with performers taking up a similarly subjugated position (2000, 25). Music practice came to be about composers and their works, with performers distinctly absent from historical accounts.

If performers were 'rubbed out' of musical performance, the role of traditional musical contexts or functions became minimised too. 'Art for art's sake' aided the emergence of the work concept, and music, in leaving behind its conceptualisation as an activity that was practised in the service of an event in church or court, became more easily recast as a product that could exist in itself. Viewing music as a product rather than an activity that accompanied a live event meant that music of the past could be preserved and performed again, regardless of its original intended use. Of this changed view of music of the past, Goehr writes:

Musicians did not look back to the past, as they once had done, to find models for contemporaries to imitate. Instead, they began to see musical masterpieces as transcending temporal and spatial barriers.... One way to bring music of the past into the present, and then into the sphere of timelessness, was to strip it of its original, local, and extra-musical meanings. By severing all such connections, it was possible to think of it now as functionless. All one had to do next was impose upon the music meanings appropriate of the new aesthetic. Many musicians proceeded, therefore, to conceive of past music in the romantic terms of works. The canonization of dead composers and the formation of a musical repertoire of transcendent masterpieces was the result both sought and achieved (2007, 246-247).

In practice, Liszt advocated that a musical equivalent of a museum should be set up with approved musical works repeat performed on a daily basis to remind and instruct the public of their cultural heritage (ibid, 205). Whilst this did not come into effect, its equivalent, the concert hall, did, where works both old and new were performed if not on a daily basis, then on a semi-permanent basis in a space which had the sole purpose of housing the performance of musical works. Concert societies, such as the *Société des Jeunes Artistes du Conservatoire* formed in 1852, in helping to secure works of Austro-German composers such as Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann and Mendelssohn in the repertory of Parisian concert life, were also influential in

constructing the new repertory (Weber, 2008, 191; Anderson et al, 2001, vol 19, 108), which came to consist increasingly of old works (Taruskin, vol 3, 679). Whilst the *Société* initially played both classic works and new works by young French composers, it later proposed to stop accepting applications from young composers, on the grounds that rehearsal time was being wasted trialling mediocre works to see if they made the mark for performance alongside the classics. Weber notes that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, most works performed were new compositions, whereas post 1850, works that were already known now comprised the majority share of works performed (2008, 169-171).

Whilst the concept of 'old fashioned' had once applied to music, works now designated 'classic' in status, were deemed to be timeless. Whereas Vivaldi had composed around 500 concertos and Bach over 300 cantatas, because it was not thought appropriate for them to repeat last week's composition for this week's event, composer outputs generally plummeted. Composition was recast as an activity which aspired to yield an artistic legacy with a corpus of works that should be preserved for the future if they bore the hallmarks of timeless genius. That genius was seen as the product of something that was timeless, not historical, was not regarded as an anomaly, but as a likely outcome of abstract music's perceived spiritual qualities. In antithesis to fashion, which changed with the seasons, genius with its divine associations was seen as being universal and not subject to the vagaries of time.

Canons and Canonisation

Music was not cast as a product of genius just by virtue of it being a classic or in repertory, however. To be designated as Goehr puts it, a 'transcendent masterpiece' (2007, 246), a work and through it, its composer, had to be admitted to the canon. The repertoire that was performed was assessed according to dominant aesthetic values, such as those of abstract instrumental music. These favoured the seemingly self-referential large scale musical compositional strategy of the complex and rigorous development of musical ideas such as motifs or harmonic progressions. Using these criteria, critical judgements were made as to which pieces formed the exemplars of their genres (Weber, 1992, 21). Through such a process, pieces and composers were

retained from the repertory to form a notion of 'musical canon', an abstraction drawn from the active repertory that held that works and their composers could be held up as representing the pinnacle of human achievement in music. Inclusion into the canon placed authority onto the composers sanctioned by it, an authority that was held in place by dominant aesthetic values.

A notable effect of canonisation was that it led to a rewriting of composers' histories. If a composer was going to be placed on a pedestal for articulating particular ideas, then the ideas had to be found present in their compositions and lived out in their lives. The reworking of various composers from the past to explain their works in terms which the nineteenth century would understand led to Bach (1685-1750) being characterised not as a composer who worked within the confines of the stylistic expectations of his day, motivated by 'imaginative research into the harmonic implications of the chosen subject matter' (Wolff, 2001, 468) but as a composer of 'original genius'. Schubart wrote in 1784-5; 'Bach was a genius of the highest degree; his spirit is so unique and individual, so immense that it will require centuries to really reach him...' (ibid).

Christopher Wolff has commented on this anachronistic reading of Bach the composer by saying:

The term 'original genius' became fashionable only after Bach's lifetime. The triumph of individual spontaneity over codified rules cannot be properly applied to him, even though by the end of the eighteenth century Bach frequently served as the model of original genius in German aesthetics, much as Shakespeare did in England... (ibid).

Even composers with less historical distance to the nineteenth century had the more mundane, hardworking, commercial and social aspects of their lives omitted in deference to the idea of isolated, unworldly genius. The supposed disinterestedness of 'great' music in the nineteenth century had the effect that not only musical works were demonstrated to be abstract and free of the material world, but that their composers were too. Beethoven's deafness played well into the idea of the composer aloof and cut off from society, even though he was rather wily in his deals with publishing companies, often offering 'exclusive' publication rights to two or more publishers for the same piece (Cooper, Coldicott, Marston et al, 1990, 192). With regards Schubert, Taruskin challenges the popular nineteenth century myth of the fate

of the artist as an unworldly man dying alone in poverty (and preferably young with a good measure of substance abuse and dubious sexually transmitted illness thrown in) by pointing out that Schubert seemed to have an awareness of the requirements of the marketplace by composing genres which he knew he would be able to sell, such as piano duets, songs, string quartets – all favourites amongst the middle classes for domestic music making. ‘At the time of his death, then, Schubert was no famished genius but a composer of solid, albeit largely local reputation’ (Taruskin, 2005, vol 3, 84).

Eagleton’s phenomenon of the commercial being ousted in favour of ‘art for art’s sake’ rears its head again, showing that canonisation could work for the reputation of the composer, with popular success being converted by commentators into pure artistic genius. Thus, Schopenhauer’s transcendent essences of the spirit world were not seen to be subject to the machinations of earthly humans and marketing, but were seen to be a product of elusive divine genius.

Aesthetics and the Discourse of Classical Music

Aesthetics, far from being nebulous pronouncements secreted away on obtuse pages of philosophical tracts, had far reaching material effects on all spheres of European musical life. They were publically debated in nineteenth century popular journals and newspapers, particularly in Germany, the country of their origin and came to be embodied in the practices of musicians, critics and audiences.¹⁹ Art for art’s sake, abstract music, the work-concept and the canon came to discursively form the discourses of classical music. Forming new conceptual networks, these aesthetic ideas also created new objects such as the disinterested work of art, quasi-spiritual instrumental music, the musical work and a virtual museum of sanctioned works. My next section looks at how the discourse of classical music was confirmed and constructed by conservatoire practices in the nineteenth century and how this discourse shaped the musical subjects who underwent conservatoire training.

¹⁹ For instance, Schumann’s *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* first published in 1834.

5.6 The Discourse of Classical Music in the Nineteenth Century Conservatoire

Conservatoires and Universities

Conservatoires and universities were set up in the nineteenth century in response to the discourse of classical music. As new aesthetic ideas began to exert discursive effects which influenced many aspects of musical life, educational institutions catered to the need to specialise. Instrumental music that was praised for its complexity needed performers who could do justice to the greatness of the works they were playing and academics who could provide the analytical framework and criteria for pronouncing a musical work as great.²⁰ Conservatoires took on the function of training musicians as performers or composers, whilst university music departments, which grew at the same time, became home to the new discipline of musicology. If conservatoires taught performers how to interpret musical works and composers which models to aspire to, then musicologists in universities set about a mission of excavating undiscovered old works, like the discipline of archaeology also new to the nineteenth century. The assembled works were then hermeneutically – in its literal sense of ‘interpreting scriptures’ (Brown, 1993, 1223) – evaluated, and criteria were developed and refined by tools such as analysis, a nineteenth century invention, which allowed a spirit of positivism to inform the musicological endeavour. Though composition was still offered in conservatoires in Europe (for instance in Berlin), in the UK, it was also taught in universities, so the distinguishing feature of conservatoires became that they trained performers. Composition was but one department amongst many in the new conservatoires, with the implication being that composers learnt primarily to compose and performers learnt to perform. Of course, some musicians still did both, but they were taught as separate activities, as the fate of improvisation that I recount below illustrates.

²⁰ See Taruskin, 2005, vol. 2, 649 on the move from ‘beauty’ to ‘greatness’ as the highest compliment in classical music.

Specialist Performers

The Paris *Conservatoire* introduced a system of having students choose a primary study, so that a student would specialise on a particular instrument, maybe also learning another closely related instrument (for instance, a flautist learning the piccolo). The move towards specialisation meant that teachers now taught specifically one instrument. As a consequence, the ratio of teachers to students at the *Conservatoire* was high; when the institution opened, there were some 350 pupils taught by 115 teachers (Anderson et al, 2001, vol 19, 107-111). Tuition was also to a higher standard and the Paris *Conservatoire's* publications on instrumental studies and technical exercises were taken up by teachers and students in conservatoires around the world. Mainstays of today's instrumental tuition such as Rodolphe Kreutzer's *40 Études et Caprices* for violin of 1796 and Jean-Baptiste Arban's *Grande method complète pour cornet à pistons et de saxhorn* of 1864 now used by trumpet students, both originated from *Conservatoire* instrumental professors.²¹

These improved technical standards, achieved by a concentration on technical exercises and students' personal practice outside lesson time, discursively confirmed the supremacy of the canon. Whilst the specialisation of education enabled instrumentalists to play virtuoso music, an important strand of nineteenth century music as the legacies of Paganini and Liszt can attest (Taruskin, 2005, vol 3, 251-287), this was viewed as popular culture by critics and philosophers, virtuosic display without worthy content (ibid, 253). Pre-1800, virtuoso standards of technique were also taught with an ability to improvise, an act of spontaneous composition on the part of the performer that would take place during performance, showcasing the performer's technical and compositional abilities. Performers would be judged by audiences on their abilities to invent new material as well as on the dexterity of their technique. Performers were also seen as integral to the act of realising a composers' score, which often omitted details like ornaments or dynamic marks, or were written in varying degrees of shorthand such as with the practice of figured bass. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, improvisation in public was discouraged. Set in opposition to performing the works of great composers which were seen as a product of genius,

²¹ With thanks to Matthew Hardy for alerting me to Arban.

improvisation was seen as being a haphazard offering by ordinary performers, and improvisation came to mean 'ad hoc', or unprepared. Whereas in the first half of the nineteenth century composers such as Beethoven, Liszt and Mendelssohn all improvised in public, as the century wore on, the written score came to take primary place over improvisation (ibid, 287-288).

The effect on education was that improvisation ceased to be taught and was not on the curriculum in conservatoires. Notably, the only educational sphere in which improvisation survived in the classical tradition was in the church music of the organist, the remaining area of public life where the performance of music was still very much tied to an extra-musical function. Though virtuosity was encouraged in conservatoires under the banner of raising technical standards, it was seen in antithesis to the 'serious' music culture of the symphonic and chamber music repertoires (Dahlhaus, 1989, 3). Instead, the pursuit of flawless technique was put into the service of interpreting the works of musical masters.

Orchestral Repertoire

The works which the new conservatoires most catered for were the ones belonging to the new orchestral repertoire. This repertoire was undergoing expansion owing to the discursive effects of abstract music, which favoured instrumental music. Orchestral music in the form of the symphony was taken as the highest form thanks to Beethoven's legacy in the hands of overawed music critics and writers such as E.T.A. Hoffman (Taruskin, 2005, vol 2, 647-648). Whilst vocal music, particularly in the form of opera, was popular with audiences, various influential commentators wrote of symphonic music that it was the 'acknowledged apex of instrumental music' (Dahlhaus, 1989, 11). Gaining ground over chamber music in the first half of the nineteenth century, which was seen as an informal, domestic genre, the symphony was characterised as the 'drama of instruments' (ibid, 14-15). Though chamber music in the form of the string quartet came to have the highest regard in philosophical writing by the end of the nineteenth century via yet another assessment of Beethoven's legacy – this time his late string quartets – as the apex of serious, cerebral

music and inward subjectivity (ibid; Weber, 1992, 21), the popularity of symphonic works in public life was already sealed.

Conservatoires reacted accordingly; until the eighteenth century, the Italian *conservatorii* had catered for singers, training their inmates to take part in the predominantly vocal music of the church and then the secular world of opera. Instruments such as oboe and violin were only added in the early 1700's in response to newly emerging genres for instrumental ensembles such as concerto (Ongaro, Selfridge-Field and Zoppelli, 2001, vol 26, 405). In response to the development of the symphony in the eighteenth century, the Paris conservatoire marked a departure from the old *conservatorii* by offering tuition in all orchestral instruments. Though it still supported vocal music in the tuition of singers and through other institutions, such as the Prix de Rome, which required composers to write operatic numbers, other conservatoires, notably the Leipzig *Konservatorium* moved towards placing orchestral studies at the heart of the conservatoire experience. Started by Mendelssohn in 1843, there was a close link between the school and the Gewandhaus orchestra from the outset, with conductors and orchestral members brought in as teachers, and students feeding directly into the orchestra in a way that allowed the direct passing on of performance traditions (Rainbow, 2006, 217). Both orchestra and *Konservatorium* were well placed to serve the growing German canon of orchestral works, which were increasing in every dimension – in the forces used, the length of the works, the technical difficulty of the individual parts and the complexity of works as a whole – and this required a new type of musician to be able to cope with the rigours of the new repertoire.

But music aesthetics did not just affect the difficulty of new music, but also the quality of performance. Orchestral music of the seventeenth century had frequently been undertaken without any rehearsals at all, and performances at court which were often for background music, often fell apart and had to be started again, or were stopped mid-way because the music did not please the listeners (Goehr, 2007, 191-193). However, the nineteenth century's attitude to music, that it ought to be listened to in a respectful silence for its own sake, and that therefore performances had to be

worthy of the work itself and bring to life ‘what the composer intended’ meant that sloppy performances became increasingly unacceptable as the century wore on.

Interpretation as ‘Reverent Curatorship’

Conservatoires performed a function of addressing these changing standards.

Mendelssohn, in his position as director of the Leipzig *Konservatorium*, had characterised music as a science as well as an art (Stauffer, 2001, vol 14, 520) and he advocated that performers should not only be trained to higher technical standards, but to higher levels of musical understanding too. He engaged teachers in theory and musicology, and individuals at the *Konservatorium* came to be highly influential in developing theories of musical analysis and hermeneutics. The Paris *Conservatoire* offered a parallel vision with its classes in music history and Reicha’s composition classes, but since conservatoires developed primarily as places for practical performance (unlike universities), the effect was not to make each performer into a theorist or musicologist, but to reinforce the greatness of the works that were being studied by endorsing the musical processes that were used in the composition, or by confirming a composer or a work’s position in the canon by identifying it as an ‘exemplary’ instance of its kind (Dahlhaus, 1983, 95-96). The so called advanced skills of listening and analysis that were introduced for music students – to listen with particular attention in a detached manner to the formal characteristics that had been identified in music theory – became the authorised way for musicians to respond to music, and thus served to reinforce the division between those who had received professional training and amateurs (see also Weber, 2008, 26-27).

Theoretical and historical studies also contributed to ideas on interpretation by claiming to find direct access to the composer’s intentions. The main guiding intention with interpretation, a result of the inviolacy of the canon, was the idea that interpretation was an act of realising ‘the composer’s voice’. Taken to its most *reductio ad absurdum* meaning by the twentieth century, Stravinsky attempted to distinguish between performers who were executors and those who were interpreters, claiming that if a performer attempted to interpret the work rather than merely execute the notation on the page – the true marker of what the composer wanted – then the

‘faithful transmission’ of the ‘composer’s will’ would be subjected to ‘criminal assault’ or a ‘sin against the spirit of the work’ (1947, 163). That live performance is impossible without any of the inevitable nuances which accompany most human activity, rather than that of a machine, Stravinsky left quietly to one side to make his point. Good interpretation, as came to be regulated through examination in music conservatoires, was achieved if the spirit of the composer had been deemed to be accessed, with performers especially praised if they were seen to self-efface themselves (Cook, 2000, 25) or if they performed their ‘personal’ interpretation within the parameters of what was deemed an acceptably ‘authentic’ interpretation, with authenticity seen as an expression of the composer’s will.²²

The protection of a cultural heritage became woven into conservatoire education through the cultivation of technical precision to ‘execute’ any given work and through ideas on interpretation. Taruskin, writes that:

beginning in the early nineteenth century, spontaneous performance skills began to lose their prestige in favour of reverent curatorship. Musicians were now trained (at conservatoires, ‘keeping’ institutions) to reproduce the letter of the text to a level of perfection that no-one had ever previously aspired to (2005, vol 2, 650).

Regulation became carefully administered through exams which proliferated in conservatoires fuelled by the obsession with setting and maintaining standards. When the English exam boards were set up with the aim of ‘the elimination of the defective instruction in music’ (Barclay Squire and Corder, 1904, vol 4, 172), the use of the word ‘defective’ betrays a keen sense of ‘correct’ instruction, or an appeal to a norm and a need to preserve standards of something held to be so important that the public must be protected.

This mission even became mapped onto accounts of earlier music education. For instance, the 1899 Grove entry for the Italian ‘*Conservatorio*’ read ‘the Conservatorios in which the great schools of Italian music were formed were so called because they were intended to preserve (*conservare*) the science of music from corruption’

²² For instance, in the performance of Chopin, adding *rubato*, a deviation from strict regular tempo, is a recognised performance convention. However, adding new notes, as Chopin himself, a noted improviser, may have done, is not generally accepted. For further discussion of these issues, see Taruskin (1995, 173).

(Phillimore, 1899, 394). The author fell into that common historian's mistake of telling us more about her own times than that she was trying to document; the idea that 'great schools' were formed by the *conservatorii* to affect preservation from 'corruption' contributes more to the nineteenth century discourse of classical music rather than anything a seventeenth century musician would recognise. I did not find reference to the existence of exams at the Italian *conservatorii*, though instead, one could speculate that a key marker in the success of the pupils' education was in whether they found work as active musicians in the theatres of Venice or Naples, or the Venetian *Ospedale*, rather than whether they achieved a faithful rendition of a composer's work. By the nineteenth century, as H.C. Colles's comment about Royal College students unable to practise the 'higher forms of art' attests to, employability was not the issue.

Conservatoires and Cultural Imperialism

The propagation and protection of cultural heritage was the explicit driver behind the formation of conservatoires. As already mentioned, the Paris *Conservatoire* had an additional function, in that it also sought to preserve instruments in its own museum, and all new music that was composed in France was given a place in its own library. The conservatoire was intended to provide practical training first and foremost, and analogies were made between the function of the conservatoire and the *Bibliothèque Nationale* (Weber et al, 2001, vol 6, 314); the conservatoire was seen as conserving practice, scores and instruments, just as the *Bibliothèque* was seen to conserve the written word.

Though the Paris conservatoire was set up with imperialist intent, with its repertoire, curriculum and exams to be rolled out to newly conquered territories, the country that proved to be the most successful with exporting its musical culture in the nineteenth century was Germany. Representing another break with the seventeenth century, which had seen Italy as the country which most successfully asserted its musical hegemony in Europe, through opera and new instrumental genres such as the concerto, German music came to be seen as exemplary in the nineteenth century. With German aesthetic ideas gaining the most currency in European musical thought,

and with musicology as a discipline born first in Germany (A.B. Marx who formed so many influential ideas on Beethoven at the beginning of the nineteenth century was the first salaried musicologist in a university – that of Berlin), Germany was well placed to canonise its own music and hold it up as a universal example of ultimate musical achievement. Through the discourses of classical music, Austro-German music became established at the forefront of musical life in Europe.

The influence of Austro-German music in conservatoires outside the Hapsburg empire can be evidenced in Reicha's influential composition manual produced for the Paris *Conservatoire* in 1823-4. Basing his tome largely on models of Austro-German music, his knowledge of which was a product of his childhood upbringing in Austria, Reicha came to be one of the first teachers in the nineteenth century who espoused Bach as the founding father of the musical canon. Through his personal friendship and admiration of Haydn and then Beethoven, Reicha also came to influence a number of *Conservatoire* students who were responsible for propagating the cult of Beethoven in Paris (Anderson et al, 2001, vol 19, 108) through concert societies.

The authority of the canon was such that when the cult of Beethoven and other Austro-German composers was taken up in the concert societies of London and Paris, it was taken not as an imperialising force, but as a universal example of great music, transcending national boundaries. The Royal College of Music, when it set itself out from the earlier Royal Academy did not overtly aim to spread German cultural imperialism, but instead believed it was encouraging the practice of great music (Ehrlich, 1985, 112-113). What is now seen as the central repertory in the Western world was the product of nineteenth century German nationalism which formulated aesthetic ideals based on its own music and sought to naturalise this music in the eyes of the rest of the world via the canon. When conservatoires were opened outside Europe later in the nineteenth century, it was the German model that was emulated. The Bohemian composer Dvorak, who had made his mark as a Czech national equivalent of the German composer Brahms, was invited to America in the 1870s by the patroness Jeanette Thurber to set up a conservatoire that would help foster an American national music. But, as Taruskin writes of this initiative:

The 'higher forms of art' that would justify and canonize the national were themselves considered not national but universal – or to put it as a modern linguist would, 'unmarked'. Yet, they were national all along. They were German. Mrs Thurber's conservatory, like all nineteenth century conservatories outside the German-speaking lands, was an agency of musical colonialism. Dvorak was brought in to direct it not as a Bohemian or a nationalist, but as a master of the unmarked tongue (2009, 26).

5.7 Conclusion

The aesthetic concepts, art for art's sake, abstract music, the work-concept and the canon, which formed and took force in Europe and particularly Germany in the nineteenth century came to be the key discursive formations behind the new discourse of classical music. New forms of education were developed in both conservatoires and universities which embodied and confirmed these discourses. In conservatoires, the performer's role was seen as that of interpretation. Representing a break with discourses of music previous to the nineteenth century, which saw music as a practice realised by performers during the act of performance, music now came to be seen as a pre-formed object which the performer sought to recreate through interpretation according to the composer's intentions. Through the discourses of classical music, which encouraged the performer to take on this 'reverent curatorship' by seeking out ever higher standards of technical perfection, the practices of the conservatoire had the effect of safeguarding the Austro-German canon, positioning it as the height of great musical achievement and strengthening a repertory. The performer's position was subjugated in relation to the composer and his great works.

Conservatoires through their practices contributed to the construction and confirmation of the discourse of classical music through the material actions of individuals in these institutions, though it is of note that the manifestation of the discourse of classical music resulted in a variety of practices; for instance, the practices of the Paris *Conservatoire* and the London colleges of music were quite different in that the former with its state funding sought to train professional performers, whereas the latter, through lack of funds, resorted to training those who could pay for their musical training, namely women who went on to be teachers, or those classed as amateurs. Despite these apparent differences, the discursive effects are the same as

both institutions demonstrated a desire to set and maintain standards and both created hierarchies of musician, subjectifying students by dividing them into categories of either professional or amateur, or performer or teacher.

New conservatoire practices such as pursuing greater levels of technical perfection, personal practice, teaching the 'correct' way to interpret works, discouraging improvisation, teaching only approved repertoire that conformed to the canon and taught its values, all marked off musicians who entered the conservatoire as those who had been professionally trained. That this professional training should lead to performance emerged as an important value in accounts of the time. Other differences emerged too around the conceptualisation of the professional; whereas the *conservatorii* supported the idea of the professional as someone who earns a living through their professional activity, the nineteenth century added another meaning to this, that of the professional who lives out the ideals of the discourse of classical music in preference to earning money.

Having established that the conservatoire was born out of a break in musical discourse which occurred between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and came to embody an institutionalisation of the discourse of classical music, I will proceed to identify continuities and differences in modern conservatoire practices and the discourses they confirm, construct and contest.

CHAPTER SIX: SPECIALISM, PRACTICE, TECHNIQUE AND INTERPRETATION IN THE CONSERVATOIRE

6.1 Introduction and aim of chapter

This chapter aims to build discourse categories which are constructed, confirmed and contested in interview texts by isolating instances of participants talking about selected practices. Focusing on practices derived from my account in chapter 5 of the historical conservatoire around the performer such as specialisation, personal practice, technical studies and interpreting music, I look for instances of students and teachers talking about these practices in the context of a modern conservatoire setting. By grouping together accounts of particular practices, my aim is to form generalised descriptions of these practices from individual statements and to see what work these descriptions accomplish in the discourses they construct, confirm or contest. I also compare my interview text material to official conservatoire literature and existing research.

If the scrutiny of individual participant's texts resembles phenomenology in intent, I attempt to pursue Foucault's 'subjectless phenomenology' by showing that these descriptions are not the product of individual initiative or idiosyncrasy, rather they work towards constructing, confirming or contesting particular discourses at work in the conservatoire environment. By comparing these descriptions and the discourses they reference to the discourse of classical music, as articulated in chapter 5 of this thesis, I am able to assess the extent to which the modern conservatoire continues to embody discourse originating in the nineteenth century.

For this chapter, I have grouped texts that talk about a particular practice together for comparison and discussion. Often these practices appear in participants' accounts, not as the main topic of conversation, but, by way of responding to other questions in the interview. For instance, most student accounts of the act of acquiring instrumental technique emerge in response to questions such as 'why did you choose your teacher?', or 'what skills or qualities will you need to learn to succeed?' rather than from a direct question on the acquisition of technique. Because references to

particular practices often occur in unexpected places, I gathered descriptions both by searching for particular words, for instance, 'practi', 'techni', 'interpret' within interview texts imported into NVivo, and also by reading the texts in full for when these practices were being described but not explicitly labelled. In both cases, the relevant texts were collated into coding categories entitled 'practice', 'technique' or 'interpretation', after which they were analysed for similarities and the discourses they embodied.

Though I have outlined in my methodology chapter that the interview situation is an interactive dialogue where both interviewer and interviewee have the ability to mutually influence each other, for clarity of presentation I only include my questions where relevant to understanding the participant's reply, and have disregarded participants' responses in analysing the data if I feel in a particular instance that they were overly biased by my questioning.

6.2 Specialism and the principal study

As with the *Paris Conservatoire*, all student participants studying in my empirical setting are admitted on the basis of a specialism, called the Principal Study (PS). Whilst the prospectus (2009, 38) gives a general description – 'the Principal Study and performance lie at the core of the learning experience' – individual department handbooks stress the nature of the commitment to the PS in more detail, giving guidelines in hours for expected time to be spent on the PS. Whilst lessons with instrumental teachers range from 30 hours for classical orchestral instruments in a 36 week academic year for first year students, which amounts to nearly one hour of one-to-one lessons per week with the same teacher, the jazz department, for instance, offers 48 PS lessons per year to its first year students. There is an increase in the frequency of lessons in years 3 to 4 across all instruments with, for instance, string players' lessons increasing from 30 hours to 45, and keyboard students' lessons increasing from 45 to 60, during the same 36 week period.

In terms of credits as well as hours, the prospectus confirms that 'in the undergraduate programme, two-thirds of the credits are allocated to PS' and there is a similar set-up

for postgraduate courses too (ibid). Options also exist to augment the time and credits allocated to the PS. In years 3 and 4, undergraduate students who receive the required marks in their assessments can go on to do 'Advanced Principal Elective Study' module A or B, with A requiring a merit level for entry to the module, and B requiring a distinction level. This module can be taken instead of other academic or practical elective classes for a further 10 credits.

There are three main ways of expanding on the specialism of the PS, called Joint Principal Study (JPS), Second Study and learning a 'doubling' instrument. Whilst the learning of a doubling instrument, where a second instrument is also taught if the relationship between the two is thought to be close, such as flute and piccolo, or violin and viola, forms a compulsory part of the relevant PS courses, application to the JPS and second study is more strictly policed. JPS occurs when two PSs are taken in tandem, for instance, composition and cello performance. It is only permitted by special application after the student has already been at the conservatoire for a term and has been assessed to have reached the requisite level across both disciplines and is thought to be able to cope with the expanded, nearly doubled workload in the case of the JPS. As a result, only a handful of students in the conservatoire take the JPS degree option.

Though the second study is an elective, entry to the course is by audition, unlike other non-performance based elective options such as harmony or composition which can be chosen as a near beginner. A wind department handbook gives examples of what a second study might entail:

This might be jazz flute for a classical flautist, clarinet for a saxophonist, singing for a percussionist, composition for a trombonist. [BMus handbook, Tuba , 2009/10, 13]

Whilst it is obvious that 'singing for a percussionist' may well be a second study, it is of note that 'jazz flute' is also seen as outside the remit of the PS for a classical flautist. The specialism of the PS for performers is not just limited to the study of a particular instrument, but to the genre of music too. Out of the student participants, only three (S2, S4, S15) talked about taking a second study in the conservatoire, and S2 also

talked of taking extra performance classes on what amounted to yet another second study outside the conservatoire.

In terms of the intensity of specialism for undergraduates, there is no comparison to other degrees in the provision of one to one lessons and the focus accorded to the PS as a proportion of the overall curriculum. Even the Oxbridge tutorial system now teaches students in groups of two or three over a twenty-four week year (Palfreyman, 2001). By contrast, other performance arts programmes, for instance, dance and acting, rely on group class teaching.²³

Specialism and practice

Whilst comparison of teaching time contact hours in higher education in general shows that the frequency of one-to-one contact time with PS teachers is unusual, this is not the only marker of the specialism that the conservatoire requires and nurtures. The departmental handbooks make clear that the bulk of a student's time is to be spent following up the work generated by the PS lesson in unassisted practice sessions. Most handbooks give recommended hours for students to allocate to this too, with the input over a year being given as anything between 546 (strings) to 670 (wind, jazz, keyboard) hours out of a recommended 800 for the whole year. In a 36 week year, that works out as between just over two and a half hours to three hours per day, if a student were to practice 6 days a week, only during term time.²⁴

Consistent with the handbooks, student and teacher participants alike admitted to expectations that solo practice on the principal study was of primary importance. However, the dedication to personal practice that was voiced in the case of most students was well above the amount advocated as necessary in the handbooks, with three hours appearing as the minimum any student pledged to do each day in instruments such as percussion (S5) and woodwind (S2), to references to 'practising all day' (S5 489-491, T11 6-8 below). Only the vocal department handbook did not specify

²³ See for instance, BMus Programme Handbook, Acting.

²⁴ Some handbooks allocate this time as 'practice', whilst others, for instance, keyboard, say 'individual practice and research; ensemble rehearsal' (BMus Keyboard Handbook, 17), indicating that not all of this time is meant to be spent on just instrumental practice.

recommended practice hours and instead warned students about the dangers of damaging the voice through overuse, whilst suggesting other methods of learning music (BMus Vocal Studies Handbook, 11). For instance S9, a string player, says when talking about her daily practice:

S9: I do as much as I need but usually I take about 6 hours [...], but I wouldn't say that was for everyday. And on the day of my lesson I give myself a break. But sometimes it's not practising; sometimes it's playing for the fun of playing. [S9- 273 [...] 275-276]

S9 states 6 hours, but then qualifies it by saying that this is not quite a daily occurrence. S13, a jazz musician, also appears to be 'talking up' her practice, and aspires to do much more than she is currently able to do:

S13: At the moment I'm still recovering from tendonitis, I can't really do more than two hours a day [...]. Ultimately for this like period of time, this block of time when I'm a complete hermit and live in my room and don't do anything, I'm going to be practising every waking hour I've got, I want to be practising or transcribing. That's my plan and then just like have a couple of evenings off a week or something where I can just not do anything, so see some friends or something. I really wanna have a period of time where all I do is practise and then after that ... I dunno. I dunno. [S13 583-587]

Similar evidence of participants aspiring or claiming to practise more than the official guidelines in the handbooks are evidenced in texts quoted in the rest of this chapter across classical and jazz participants. Indicating the quantity of practice that should be done is often mentioned by students when talking about other aspects of their practice.

If what students say they do is different from the handbook, this should offer no great surprise in that handbooks and other institutional literature are often written with the purpose of satisfying official educational regulations with their hours quotas and credit units, thus confirming prevalent discourses of higher education (to be discussed in chapter 7) rather than closely reflecting curriculum content and localised practices. However, in the case of students practising, the belief that more practice is better seems to be one particularly nurtured by participants in the conservatoire. My participant data on personal practice indicated this in the majority of cases, even though this stands in opposition to research into practice that draws from sports training and psychology perspectives. This research states that beyond three hours a

day, students are not achieving significant gains to their performance capabilities (Roset i Llobet, Odam and Oliveres i Gili, 2007) and, taking the same line as the Vocal Studies Handbook, claims that students are opening themselves up to physical injury. This discourse of musician as a physiological and cognitive entity can be contrasted with discourses of the artist elaborated in the previous chapter that exist within the discourse of classical music, most notably the discourse of the unworldly artist, dying young and diseased, and the discourse of art as a pseudo-religion which similarly places emphasis on the aesthetic and spiritual aspects of being an artist rather than any physical, bodily concerns.

When physical strain was mentioned in discussion with one teacher – a wind player – the impact of it was minimised;

B: I've always been slightly jealous of wind players that they say, well, after 3 or 4 hours my lip gives up

T9: no that's not true. A load of rubbish [...]. It's never stopped me doing tons of practice. I've never had a lip give up any more than string players have got knackered. I've done up to 7 hours in a day before if I'd really had to. 3 hours, break, 3 hours, and an hour after dinner, I wouldn't want to do that every day, but for me personally that's never been a problem. But only occasionally; [...] it's like building up to a race or something. You would need to peak at the right time, but I couldn't keep that every day. [T9: 707-709, 712-716]

Showing similarities to S9's statement on practice (S9: 273), T9 talks of 'tons of practice' and then qualifies her statement by saying that her seven hours practice is not done every day. Though T9 describes herself to be careful to prevent injury by taking precautions to avoid strain, it was notable that amongst all the participants, no one mentioned the possibility of injury as a possible reason to discourage unlimited practice, though S13 who professed to wanting to practise 'every waking hour I've got' stated she already had an injury which was limiting her practice. Similarly, only two students (S2, S4) and one teacher (T1) mentioned any benefit in doing less practice. Conservatoire discourse carries a commitment to emphasising marathon-like practice sessions whilst downplaying the body as a physical entity open to injury.

Only very special circumstances allowed for practice to be sidestepped altogether:

T3: You can't just stand up there and do it, unless you're a natural, unless you're a genius. And of course, there have been in jazz natural geniuses, people that never did any study at all – Chet Baker is the classic example, trumpet player, who never did any practice, didn't have an understanding of music theory, didn't even know what key he played in. And those people of course are very, very few and far between. So it's all about hard work!

T3, a jazz teacher, invokes the idea of 'natural genius', as a way to obviate the need to practise. Tapping into discourses of genius which describe music as a divine gift not the product of human toil, T3 perpetuates a distinction between geniuses who are gifted enough to not need education or practice to those who have to work to acquire it. My point here is not to seek to debunk the genius myth, but to observe its effect. T3 in this case uses it to underline the fact that most performers, as mere mortals, will have to practise, and practise hard.

Given that in appearance there is a disparity between the amount of practice a student aspires or claims to do, and recommended amounts in both official literature, written in higher education's bureaucratic language of hours and credits, and research which emphasises a physiological approach, what do participants stand to gain by their professed commitment to practice? I will refer to the central position of practice for conservatoire students and the quantity of it they aspire to do, as the 'practice work ethic' and the following section will seek to bring out a description of it by looking at motivations that appear to drive it, and the work that it appears to achieve for participants in their accounts.

6.3 The practice work ethic

The practice work ethic appeared as a consistent theme whether it was positioned as being passed on from teachers to students, or emanating from students themselves. A string student said:

S1: With my teacher especially, if you semi apply yourself, he doesn't really want to know. You've got to really pull your socks up and it took me a few weeks to learn. [S1: 373-375]

S13 echoes S1's concern with teacher disapproval if she did not practise enough:

S13: It's just like good to be sort of kept, kept on your feet because if you don't practise then you get your arse kicked and it's just like, there's no one to do that otherwise apart from yourself and your own motivation [...]. [S13 159-162]

T1 does not condone long hours of practice himself, and was the only teacher to mention this view, but he is aware of the prevalence of the practice work ethic through his interactions with students and fellow teachers, with varying motivations driving each of the people he talks about in his examples;

T1: I am aware of one student who I spoke to in an interview and I said 'how are things going with principal study teacher?' and she said 'I don't feel supported' and when I asked 'why?', she said 'well I've been doing six hours a day practice and my teacher is not pushing me to do more. So clearly he is not supporting me because he doesn't think that I should be doing any more so he doesn't think that I'm any good' [...] So, it is tricky to know [where the urge to practise originates] and I am also aware that certain departments and even reasonably high up in departments bears the sense that actually if you do want to make it you need to be doing seven hours a day of practice and in a meeting it was actually said 'I can tell you how many hours a day a student will need to do if they are going to be successful, they're going to have to do this many hours a day practice'. [T1: 470-9]

T1 positions the practice work ethic as emanating from both students and their teachers. His text above also shows that the practice work ethic can be made to serve different purposes. In the case of the student account he narrates, the drive to practise more and more works to display commitment and feelings of validation on the part of the student, recalling Kingsbury's observation that 'many music students [make an association] between their musicality and their self-image' (1988, 5). The story shows a student using practice to pit her own view of her worth against what she imagines her teacher's view to be. She uses quantity of practice as an evaluative term, rather than an activity with a purpose in itself, with more practice seen as a positive evaluation and less practice as a negative one. As such her motivations to practise are positioned by T1 as personal and what I will describe as internal; whilst she looks for external approval, the reward she seeks is to do with her conception of self. By comparison, T1's account of teachers [T1: 474-9] uses 'making it' and being successful in the profession – an external measure of success – as a key motivation for practice. In the next two sections, I present examples of participants' internal and external motivations

to practise to see what the practice work ethic achieves for those who reference it from these different perspectives.

Internal motivations to practise

Conservatoire students are described favourably by each other as committed to their studies. One student talks of her undergraduate years at a university:

S11: well, I'd say probably at the time I was a bit of a party animal and I probably wasn't focused enough and actually coming to a conservatoire like here, I just realised how dedicated the youngsters are and at that time in my life I wasn't dedicated enough and I wasn't driven enough and I wasn't focused enough. [S11-33-36]

S11 marks out conservatoire students as being different from how she saw herself, using 'dedicated', 'driven' and 'focused' to describe characteristics she lacked, but which are necessary for conservatoire study. The same language is used by T3 when he talks about jazz musicians practising, as practice seems to be a key way a musician can articulate his/her dedication, drive and focus:

T3: I mean jazz musicians that I know have the biggest practices, and the longest and most serious and most focused practices than anyone else I know, jazz musicians are always talking about music and loving it all the time, all kinds of music, not just jazz, and I don't know, I sometimes get the impression with some straighties that they don't do that. It's kind of more like a job. [T3: 496-499]

Combining S11's appeals to 'focus' [S11: 36] and T1's story of the student who uses the length of practice as an evaluative term [T1: 470-474], T3 aims to legitimate jazz musicians through similar means. When T3 describes classical musicians or 'straighties' as approaching music and practice 'like a job', however, he recruits another device into his legitimation of jazz musicians, comparing those who treat music as a vocation to those who are 'loving it all the time'. Making his account of practice function as a positive evaluation, length, focus, seriousness and motivation based on a love of music, rather than an external instrumentalist motive, are used to qualify the worth of jazz musicians.

Just as T3 uses practice to differentiate jazz from classical musicians, S7 uses practice as a way to mark out conservatoire students from those at university:

S7: [...] I could be really controversial and just say people that have been to university can't come to music college. I mean, that's being unfair on all people from university because there are some good people, that go to university I know, but ... if you've made your choice to do marine biology for three years, it's almost like saying well ... what I can't stand is the arrogance ... is that 'I've been to university and hardly practised yet I'm still going to be as good as so-and-so.' And I ... the number of times people have said that to me just ... honestly, I ... nothing annoys me more because [...] maybe they are, but it's the arrogance of 'I can do that.' I would never say 'I've been to music college for four years, I can go and do marine biology at Oxford.' I couldn't ... I just couldn't. You know, 'cause there wouldn't be time.

B: Has someone actually said that? Are you speaking from actual experience?

S7: Yeah.

B: OK.

S7: It's all in the genes, apparently.

B: What is?

S7: Being a good musician. You don't need to practise.

B: Oh, OK.

S7: Loads of people have said that to me. I mean, it's not just one person, it's a few people. And ... I just think it's ... I just think it's absurd. [S7: 762-780]

S7 rejects the idea of 'natural genius' and sees practice as the only route to becoming a good musician. As with the participant extracts above, he makes a positive link between hours of practice and being a 'good musician'. But he also holds a dogmatism that insists that practice must be the primary activity in an aspiring musician's life; mixing university study with practice is not seen as a legitimate way to become a professional musician. Like T3's insistence that the jazz musician is 'loving it all the time', and S9's characterisation of the conservatoire student as 'focused' and 'dedicated', a devotion to the practice work ethic is a way of signalling commitment to being a good musician, and talk about practice achieves an evaluative function.

External motivations to practise

Whilst the majority of students and teachers cite internal motivations for the practice work ethic, a few cite external reasons too. Students' fear of disapproval of their

teachers appeared in the texts of S1 and S13 above (S1 373-375; S13 159-162) as a motivating factor, however, T1, one of two teachers who questioned the practice work ethic, is the only teacher to posit that students are self-motivated in their practice not just because they fear their teachers, but because of competition for similar career goals from their fellow students:

T1: actually it might be profound insecurity about the reality of the situation they find themselves [...] they realise they are looking over their shoulders and they are seeing that people are better, [...] they realise that their future goal can only get there if they have, they are better than the other person so I think they put a lot of pressure on themselves, I am aware of the students here being very serious. I had some students come from where I used to work to do a workshop [...] they were really musical but amidst this they were laughing and joking a lot of the time and our students found that really, really difficult to deal with. [T1: 452-460]

Here, T1 cites vocational goals as fuelling the practice work ethic, contradicting T3's talk of disinterested love. Furthermore, whereas S11 and T3 see 'seriousness' as a way to legitimate what they do [S11: 33-36/T3: 496-499], T1 characterises it as an unnecessary affectation which students willingly adopt to make them feel secure about their job prospects. After talking about practice T1 then says:

T1: I actually think a place like this does, it takes the enjoyment out of music quite often, because it becomes a serious thing to do, and that is a fundamental flaw here. Students don't want it to be fun, they want it to be protestant work ethic, we are not happy, if you haven't had pain then you haven't had success, it's that kind of, have to suffer for your art. Now I think that's for the top students, for the ones below that as well, and in some ways for the ones below that even more so they want to suffer more because it means security because they feel they are making success. [T1: 491-497]

By contrast, students did not overtly link pain and suffering to the practice work ethic as T1 suggests, and neither did any other teachers.

Summary

Whilst handbooks and research findings recommend that three hours practice a day is a productive quantity of practice, reflecting discourses of higher education and the musician as a physical, injury-prone entity, students admit to doing much more. This commitment to practise as a privileged activity of conservatoire life, which I have called the practice work ethic holds that the more practice, the better. Participants talk

about the practice work ethic, as motivated by both internal and external concerns. I describe an internal motivation as using talk of the practice work ethic as a positive evaluation on the part of the participant with more hours of practice signalling a greater commitment to music. By contrast, one example appeared of a teacher describing an external motivation for the practice work ethic, with competition between students for employment outcomes used to explain the phenomenon.

When participants talk of internal motivations for the practice work ethic on their chosen specialism, they invoke the discourse of classical music; in referencing disinterested love, focus, seriousness and dedication, participants are tapping into the discursive formations of music as pseudo-religion as outlined in chapter 5. At first I interpreted the jazz musicians' endorsement of classical music discourses as occurring as a direct result of the jazz musicians absorbing the prevalent discourses in the conservatoire environment, or a case of trying to 'beat the classical musicians at their own game'. However, the more likely explanation is that these discourses are common not just to classical music, but to all arts practitioners; disinterested love for 'Art', seriousness, focus and dedication can be said to be common constructions of all musicians since the nineteenth century. Thus classical and jazz musicians can share common discursive formations whilst differing on others, notably attitudes to improvisation and the authority of the written score.²⁵

T1, the one teacher who uses external motivations as an explanation for the practice work ethic is informed by discourses of employability. These appear to sit in direct opposition to the dominant conservatoire discourse of classical music by invoking fear, not passion, and questioning the seriousness of conservatoire students. Though both internal and external motivations for practising can have a similar outcome – that a high standard is achieved – it is notable that disinterested love and employability appear as incompatible, as with T3's suspicion of those who treat music and practice 'like a job'.

²⁵ See Cook (2000, 6-18) on rock musicians and notions of the authentic artist. My thanks to Don Lebler for informing me that pop musicians can share a similar practice work ethic to classical musicians.

The only similarity to the discourse of classical music that T1 references, is his talk of pain and suffering. Whereas nineteenth century artists were depicted as suffering for their art because of a trade-off that held that artists disregard any thought of financial reward or social bonds, instead being concerned with the sublime and the divine, T1 constructs their suffering in the name of a worldly concern for employment in the marketplace. Though the idea of pain and suffering are common to discourses of both classical music and employment (as in T1's 'Protestant work ethic' 493), the motivation behind each type of suffering is so different that T1 cannot be described as referencing a discourse of classical music at all, but rather a modern fear of graduate unemployment.

6.4 What do students do when they practise?

Whilst the first section of this chapter looked at students' motivation and reasons to practise, this section looks at descriptions of what goes on in their practice. Two teachers questioned what students actually did when practising. For instance:

T4: Isn't it interesting that we can have nothing in the programme anywhere which is about how you practise? And yet, it is what students spend hours and hours of their time actually doing. [...] I am absolutely certain that 90% of our students practise not very effectively, most of the time. [T4: 503-506]

This question of 'effective' practice became pertinent not only in the light of how much students chose to practise, but also in how students saw their practice relating or competing with other course activities and what their practice consisted of. After showing that practice is contrasted by participants with other performance activities, such as ensemble rehearsal or playing to an audience, I look at participant accounts of practice time which reveal the construction of a split between technique and repertoire, to see where their priorities lie.

Practice versus performance

A post-graduate brass student, on the orchestral training course, who did his undergraduate degree at a university describes the difference between his own university and conservatoire experiences as the following:

S5: Probably you're getting more experience [at university], but then again, you get much more time to practise here and a lesson a week and that sort of thing [....] [S5: 14-17]

This quote illuminates an important distinction for participants; that all playing or rehearsal does not constitute practice and that practice does not contribute to performance experience. The 'experience' of which S5 speaks in this context is playing in ensembles such as orchestra, the type of activity that one might do as a professional musician. By contrast, practice is seen as a separate activity to ensemble playing, a solitary pursuit.

S6 makes a case for the amount of performance a student experiences as varying between instrumentalists:

S6: Percussionists are really busy, whereas, the string department, I have friends in the string department and they get really frustrated as all they do is practise all day and there's never any orchestras and it's difficult to find gigs. [S6: 489-451]

S5, however, positions conservatoires as offering personal improvement on his instrument rather than orchestral experience or professional advice:

B: Do you feel that [the conservatoire] actually provides more of an all round vocational training as in saying this is what the profession is like and this is how we can prepare you? [...]

S5: They don't really do that – they expect you to get that from the teachers. Which quite often, well, quite often teachers just teach you how to play the [instrument], basically. They don't tell you how to actually be a professional sometimes.

B: Do you think that would be useful?

S5: Oh definitely, it would be useful to have a class to give you hints on how to act and try and get contacts and that sort of thing, as sometimes that's the main thing, knowing the right people so you can get into the right sort of things. Quite often, there's a list of people they know and they just phone them up rather than trying to find the best person. [S5: 55-65]

T11 describes a similar situation when he talks of his own student days:

T11: Well, my experience was unusual, because [my teacher] created a special course around me. [...] he felt that playing in an orchestra was a bad thing to do and that if you are talented, you should just spend all day practising. [T11: 6-8]

T11 later explained that his teacher had planned for him to become a chamber musician in a string quartet [T11: 168-169]. Though he recounts his teacher as invoking a discourse of classical music in insisting a ‘talented’ student specialise in the genre of music seen as the most serious of musics since the mid-nineteenth century (see chapter 5), T11 would have preferred to have had orchestral experience:

T11: I was too good to play in the orchestra apparently, and this is nonsense. And I have not thanked [my teacher] for having done that to me, I should have been in the orchestra, I should have been learning the ropes, learning the repertoire, learning how to behave, learning how it all works, instead I did my learning when I entered the profession. [T11: 152-156]

He talks not only about repertoire and performing, but also about ‘learning how to behave, how it all works’. Both T5 and S5 talk of something that can be gained in orchestra that is not available through personal practice. However, later in talking about his own teaching experiences, T11 sees the emphasis on ensemble playing at another conservatoire where he has taught as competing and getting in the way of his own students’ personal practice time:

T11: At [this other conservatoire] where I taught for 15 years, the people who run the place are really mentally ill, they should be sectioned, because the [...] students often spend 6 hours a day four days a week in the orchestra. [...] [There are only x players] in the [conservatoire], and they have symphony orchestra one, symphony orchestra two, opera orchestra, the composers’ orchestra,

B: They do the whole lot?

T11: The whole lot, ridiculous! So they are all playing, they go from one to the next to the next, how stupid is that? So never having time to practise, but they did so well. And I know why, it’s taken me years to work it out. Every week they came to their lessons not having had time to practise and all I ever did was teach them basics which meant getting their fingers moving from the base joints, they can go, umm, intonation exercises, shifting exercises, tone production exercises, correcting the bow hold, correcting the bow arm, and then they go away again and sit there for 6 hours in the damned orchestra playing all these fiendishly difficult symphonies and pieces, because orchestral playing, [is] [...] so difficult! Playing the symphonic works if you want to do them well is so difficult, and so they are being forced to run around the [instrument] and then they come to their lesson and it’s like doing the ironing, playing in tune, get the fingers moving, really get the bow parallel to the bridge, and actually they did amazing things [...]. [T11: 240-241, 258-262]

Though T11 sees the benefit of orchestral rehearsals and concerts for the aspiring musician, there comes a point where this playing is seen to get in the way of practice. Practice is thus characterised as personal technical development, in opposition to ensemble experience, which is constructed by T11 and S5 as professional development – a mirroring of the internal and external motivations to practise explored in the last section. T11's observation that his students 'did amazing things' on this unrelenting diet of orchestral rehearsals is of note too, in that it seems to negate the assertion that so many hours of solo practice are of optimum use, whilst still insisting that they are necessary.²⁶

Students also voiced similar opinions:

S7: I think it's the attitude that orchestra's the be-all and end-all, and actually it's not. [...] And that's what I mean... they don't ask the students what they want. You're kind of all brought into it conformed 'you've got to do what we say.' So ... I think that if I was running a music school what would I do? [...] You'd have to change the whole system in a way. You'd have to have regular orchestral rehearsals instead of doing it like they do now. There'd have to be a session, say... I dunno... Friday afternoon you'd have to have orchestra for three hours for the whole term and then towards the concert you'd do two days, say.[...] And just try and free the schedule up as much as possible so that they understand that the students' main focus for the week is to practise themselves. I mean ...

B: [interrupts] Do ... do you think that is the main focus for everyone that's here?

S7: Well, I dunno, 'cos I can't talk for anybody else. I mean ... uh ... it depends what they're coming for. I don't know ... I mean I've always only ever thought about practising myself. And I mean everybody I've talked to has always been the same. [S7: 243 [...] 251-556 [...] 258-264]

Other participants invoked a tension between practising and other types of playing, this time contrasting solo practice with public performance. T1 describes a situation where practice becomes a goal in its own right (like S13 above S13: 583-587) so that practice is privileged over performance:

T1: I think they enjoy practising, because they do a lot of it and actually performing things scares them. Interestingly we've had someone coming in dealing with performance nerves. It's a thing another colleague of mine had said. When he was

²⁶ See also Havas (1998, 128), for a contestation of the practice work ethic, that all types of playing should constitute an opportunity to practice.

studying (he was a singer) he studied at the Royal Academy. Christmas at the end of his first term he went to a family party and somebody said 'Oh, you are studying singing, can you sing for us?' And he couldn't. And I think we have this thing, we have people here who study music all the time, but actually don't do it, it is a really odd thing. They are amazing in the practice room. But that's not where it really matters. [T1: 743-749]

T1 sees the practice work ethic as producing a scenario where practising becomes substituted for performance as the primary goal of the conservatoire musician. He sees performance ('doing it') as having a greater value, whilst private practice becomes a safe way for students to engage with music in the privacy of the practice room in opposition to public performance which students can see as 'scary'. T1 negates the importance of practice by saying that what goes on in the practice room does not 'matter' unless it has a material effect in a public sphere, even if that public sphere is as informal as entertaining family at a Christmas party.

Summary

Across participant accounts, the desired balance between private practice and other performance activities such as ensemble playing varied, with those favouring personal practice confirming a discourse of classical music, and those who saw ensemble performance as practice for the profession aligning themselves with a discourse of higher education for employability. It is of note that participants in both of these categories saw being a professional musician as the goal of conservatoire study. However, their preferred route of achieving this differed, with emphases on personal practice or ensemble performance pitted in opposition to each other. These oppositions were seen in terms of two factors. Firstly, the time commitment involved for practice and orchestral rehearsal took up many hours on a regular basis, so competed for students' time. Secondly, despite both activities involving students playing their instruments for many hours, the two activities were not seen as compatible or transferable in the conservatoire. However, the many hours of personal practice undertaken as a student was seen by some to lead to an orchestral job once a student had graduated (further explored in chapter 7).

Taking part in orchestra was recognised as contributing to knowledge of repertoire and also extramusical elements directly related to employment prospects, such as knowing

how 'the system' worked to get employment and 'how to act' in a professional environment. The commitment of those in the conservatoire to student practice hours, especially in the light of S5's account of his experiences at both university and conservatoire do, however, suggest the surprising finding that conservatoires offer less vocational training in favour of private practice than universities which have an active student concert life. Remarking on the social organisation of the conservatoire, Kingsbury said:

The notion that extensive commitment to orchestral work is likely to hinder a student's musical development cannot meaningfully be said to benefit the student's future professional career. In many cases, however, it can be seen to contribute to a [principal study] centred social organisation in the conservatory. What is generally articulated as a 'musical' concern (this kind of musical development is more valuable than that kind of musical development) is thus at least in part a social organisational concern (1988, 57).

I will now argue that both the 'musical' and the 'social organisational' concerns which Kingsbury talks of are part of the construction and confirmation of the discourse of classical music.

Technique versus repertoire

When students talk about their practice, they divide up their main work into the two pillars of the nineteenth century conservatoire pedagogical mission: technique and repertoire.²⁷ For instance:

S14: I practised a lot. I just worked kind of to targets for my performance. I just, like 'I've got my technical, got to learn all my scales, I've got end of year recital, I've got to learn these pieces and play them really well.' [S14 87-89]

The split between technique and repertoire is also built into music exams, though in jazz, the opposing pair to technique is not exclusively about repertoire, but also about students doing something 'of their own', to fulfil expectations for jazz improvisation. For instance:

T3: And as far as the exams are concerned, on the undergraduate level, the midyear exams tend to be more of the, what we would describe as the technical exams, so there

²⁷ See Kingsbury (1988, 136-140) for further commentary on this dualism.

will be times when we ask them to play something quite specific stylistically, perhaps to play in a particular way, they must demonstrate a particular ability to do things. Um, but the end of year exams tend to be a little bit more open, you know, to give the students the opportunity to you know, display something more of their own, their own ideas, whatever, so I think that's quite a nice mixture. [T3: 222-236]

However, in the case of both classical music and jazz, discussion of technique was always talked about separately from repertoire, improvisation – or music. For instance, S8 talks about his practice routine;

S8: I still have a real dedication, hopefully, to practising and what not, I think the key now, the reason I do it now is that I love to come in at 7 in the morning, just 'cos I love the feeling of getting in and having a completely clean slate, and starting, not like panicking at 3pm as I've only got 6 hours left in the day and I have to get 6 hours practice done, and it's just an unhealthy environment to put yourself in. [...] Get in, just do the right work, do the technical work, that I find, frankly fucking boring. Um, just get it done and feel good about it, and remember it every day. Because then at 10 o'clock when I've finished my three hours of technical whatever, someone can call me up and say 'do you fancy going for lunch, and I can say, yes I can, I've got some time in the day, because I've done my bloody work, I've done the horror work, I can do my repertoire later in the day, whatever. [S8: 437-440 [...] 443-447]

After articulating his commitment to the practice work ethic, S8 describes how he divides his practice into 'technical work' and 'repertoire'. Just as a hierarchy emerges in playing between personal practice and performing in ensembles, a clear hierarchy of importance emerges in how students talk about their technical studies in relation to learning musical pieces. Though S8 says he divides up his practice equally between technique and repertoire in terms of his time, he ensures his technical work is accomplished first, even though he claims he does not like doing it. By contrast, his attitude to timetabling his repertoire practice appears much more casual.

6.5 Technique: the goal of conservatoire learning

The importance of technique appeared throughout participant texts, not just in relation to personal practice, but given as a justification for coming to the conservatoire. At another point in the interview, S8 talks about the work he needed to accomplish on coming to the conservatoire:

S8: When I came [here], my intonation was diabolical, my use and control of the bow and my posture was ok and my awareness was ok, but I quickly discovered that I'd learnt a few things about what happened in music at [my school], like they force you to do those things like A levels, all that rubbish, um but they don't really teach you about the music. Coming [here], I needed to learn [my instrument], I needed to learn how to put the bow on the string perfectly every time, so that it never went wrong. [376-381]

Though he appears critical of his schooling in saying 'they don't really teach you about the music', he then proceeds to talk about his conservatoire goals in terms of technique, with 'learning' his instrument meaning how to operate his instrument.

Many students who were interviewed saw the acquisition of instrumental technique as the primary goal of their conservatoire studies, and also cited it as of primary importance in choosing to come to a conservatoire:

S13: another pro for me has been before I came here, I mean although I had some lessons, I was kind of self-taught in a way that I didn't have regular lessons and my teacher was always off touring and stuff and like my technique was pretty terrible, which is why I had really bad wrist problems and like the jazzers here have to do classical playing and obviously classical technique is like, if you learn classical technique that's like perfect technique. My technique has just like improved so much it has just helped my playing by just having classical lessons, and like that's been something that has just been so good for me. [S13: 152-158]

This jazz player cites her classical studies as being an advantage of conservatoire study, with classical technique characterised as 'perfect technique'. Though in another part of the interview she talks of reasons why it is not necessary to receive a conservatoire training as a jazz player:

S13: obviously jazz didn't come from people going to college and learning [...] a lot of people [...] have sort of asked me 'why are you going to college to learn jazz?', because that's not what jazz is about, it's a bit of a contradiction in itself [...]. [S9: 113-116]

A key benefit to S13 of a conservatoire training is the acquisition of technique rather than a musical or vocational benefit.

S9 similarly makes the connection between technique and a conservatoire training when talking about the teachers she knows in her home country:

S9: These are the four who have been properly classically trained in the conservatory and the others are just sort of doing background music, self-taught; when you look at

them the technique is terrible, you wouldn't want them for a teacher. [S9 78-80]

As well as promoting technique as an educational outcome, S9 also denigrates 'background music', invoking H.C. Colles's connection of the 'higher forms of art' (Ehrlich, 1985, 112-113; see chapter 5) with conservatoire training.

The pursuit of technique, especially 'perfect technique' (above: S13 156, S8 381; below S7: 66) was a common reason students gave for coming to a conservatoire, or choosing a particular teacher. After declaring that he came to the conservatoire 'purely for my teacher', S7 goes on to say:

S7: [My teacher] has got this complete kind of technical knowledge that's just, I mean, way beyond anything you can comprehend. I mean, it's not possible to do everything he says because if you did you'd be a technical ... 100% perfection, but he has this method, where you'll just go through it on a basis, and he sees six years as a timeframe for what you need to do. Like, he taught [a well-known player] for six years and then I'll have been with him for six years at the end of this year. So it's like six years seems to be his timeframe for getting the work through that you need to do. And I mean, before I went to him I'd never really had a technical foundation, if you like. I was kind of doing it all just through ... I mean I don't believe in natural ability, so it's probably more just sheer hard work and trying to make it work despite not having any technique. So I was forcing myself to try and play well.

Given that students and teachers appear to separate the technical from music, it is of note that the technical receives much more attention than the music. S7 also seems to talk about his teacher's technical knowledge as a thing of awe; his description of this knowledge as 'way beyond anything you can comprehend' seems to imbue technique with a sense of the sublime that you would expect from a nineteenth century discourse on music.

Both S7 and S8 describe themselves as having had 'no' technique before they came to the conservatoire and S13 and S9 use the term 'self-taught', in a derogatory way. 'Self-taught' is set out against a conservatoire training, with the difference in technique being a key marker of receiving a conservatoire education, rather than any music related elements (see S13: 113-115 above). If a feeling of deficiency in technique was a common concern of students before they came to the conservatoire, this was also echoed by teachers:

T11: Basically, your typical first year at the guildhall, plays not a note in tune, and they are playing too far from the bridge with a weedy, pressed sound, and they have no musical rhythm, and by the way no repertoire at all, they have learnt two or three biggish pieces total, and they are as stiff as a board, and you have to start from the beginning. [T11: 301-304]

T12: If you've left it quite late to address your technique, it's very, very serious, it's extremely serious, you can almost not play, so it is possible to get postgraduates who crash their way through all kinds of things and have to actually go back to the beginning. [T12: 244-247]

Though T11 does mention repertoire, he couches it with 'by the way' as if it was an add-on consideration. T12 sees having no technique as far more serious than having no repertoire or any musical deficiency. Both T11 and T12 talk of having to teach their students 'from the beginning' despite years of formal instrumental lessons that most classical musicians undertake (Burt and Mills, 2009) in order to reach the entry level for conservatoire study.

So widespread is the preoccupation with technique, that some do not talk about music at all. In answer to the question of what is needed to become a professional musician S15, a singer says:

S15: Well the first is to have this um, when you receive a blow, to get you two hours or three or utmost four, to overcome it. [...] and secondly to have very good technique and then the third one is to have a very good voice and a good instrument. [S15: 487-491]

Technique remained a prevalent theme at the different stages of conservatoire study. S7, who went to a specialist music school prior to coming to the conservatoire, and who has been with his teacher for 6 years already (see above S7: 69) is contemplating more postgraduate study with the same teacher. I ask him 'why?

S7: Well, because there aren't any ... like I say, there aren't any other teachers that will teach you a technique and you can always improve your technique somehow. [...] I mean, don't get me wrong, I'm desperate to go and find somebody else, as well. But I think even if I did find somebody else I'd still have to come back to [my current teacher] just to make sure that my technique was OK. Because I know what it would be like with somebody else. [S7: 875-879]

After six years of intense concentration on technique with his teacher (two at his specialist music school and four on the undergraduate course at the conservatoire), practising many hours a day, S7 is still worried about not having enough technique.

It is perhaps this kind of emphasis on technique which leads S4, a fourth year percussionist to remark

S4: I think, when I go to final recitals at the moment, almost all of them I walk out and I think 'technical level far better than musical level', [...] there are a huge amount of people here who aren't very musical.... [S4: 194-196]

Summary:

In this section, the relationship between technique and repertoire, the two poles of conservatoire pedagogy, has been looked at in participant texts. The concerns of the nineteenth century conservatoire in technique and repertoire still appear as contemporary concerns, however, there is a strong overall emphasis on technique, with hardly any reference to music. Seeking a description of technique, my data shows that it is placed in a privileged position; teachers are praised for their technical knowledge and the acquisition of technique provides a primary reason to attend a conservatoire in accounts by both students and teachers. Having technical deficiencies is seen as very disadvantageous, with teachers talking of having to take their students 'back to the beginning' upon starting at a conservatoire, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

I searched for an equivalent emphasis on music in participant texts, however, whereas all students had an opinion on technique, only a handful mentioned anything to do with music, repertoire, or interpretation. This opposes Kingsbury's findings in an American conservatory from the 1980s:

While technique is seen as essential to adequate musical performance, sheer technique is disdained almost as though it were a form of carnal knowledge. Sheer technique is as distinct from truly musical performance as sheer sex might be from true love. (1988, 137)

Kingsbury's observation confirms that of S4 [194-196] above. However, whereas Kingsbury finds strong evidence of a commitment to solo repertoire and interpretation

(ibid, 55 and 137), my data revealed a conspicuous silence on such matters. Whilst Kingsbury states that a commitment to solo technique serves to reinforce the 'artistic individuality of the faculty members', in my data, no such artistic individuality seemed to surface in the relationship between student and teacher over and above a commitment to technique. My next section looks at how an emphasis on technique in participants' texts confirms the discourse of classical music in the conservatoire.

6.6 Technique as 'the means to an end'

A concentration on technique was aligned with a discourse of the physiological musician by S13 [152-158] above and S15:

S15: now this year that I, my technique has progressed somehow, I am contented by the idea of becoming a choral singer because it doesn't hurt my voice anymore because it usually hurts my voice. [S15 222-224]

Here the relationship between the means and the end is clear as the student makes a link between technique and use of his voice. It is of note that the two students who do make a link between technique and the physiological aspects of playing are a vocal student, perhaps reflecting, like the Vocal Studies Handbook, a greater awareness of such matters where the body *is* the instrument, and a student who has already experienced injury.

The link between possible means and ends is more tenuously stated when students talked about technique in relation to music, however. Despite saying it is the means to an end, it is more difficult to ascertain what the end is:

S7: After all, technique is the means to an end, isn't it? You can't ... I mean, people talk so much rubbish about (sighs) imagine pretty trees and stuff while you play, I mean, teaching kids is fine. But, imagine this, imagine that and they'll tell you phrase it like this or phrase it like that, but if you don't have the technique to do it in the first place, then you can't. Whereas somebody like [my teacher] will go 'you've got to do it like this, but you need to be able to do it like this technically in order to achieve that,' and surely that's the best way of teaching somebody at music college. I'd say, having a solid technique ought to be ... I mean, obviously being good musically is important as well. I mean, that's crucial, but ... having solid technique I'd say is the key. [S7: 890-898]

Whilst perhaps trying to say that technique is a means to being able to play the repertoire, S7 also cites 'being good musically' as a separate factor to technique. It is not clear whether 'being good musically' is a separate goal, something intrinsic, or something achieved through technique. S8 also makes implied links between technique and music:

S8: people come up to me after a concert and they say how they really enjoyed listening to the music. They don't say 'gosh you couldn't put the bow on the string'. I don't think there is anything technical really outstanding from my playing now [...]. [S8: 384-387]

S8's implication is that having sorted out his own technique he is now able to transmit the music to the audience without the audience being distracted by any inadequacies of himself as a performer. S8's account suggests that the only way to be made visible to the audience is to be defective in technique. As long as the performer provides a technically flawless mediation service between the composer and the audience, the audience is happy to ignore the performer.

One student, a fourth year instrumentalist who will be going on to study conducting as a postgraduate student, does talk more explicitly of technique as being a route to conveying musical ideas:

S10: the first thing is the absolutely really good communication of ideas through a very, very good baton technique, I think you want to combine that, and then real knowledge of all the kinds of the instruments of the orchestra, the concept of making an orchestral sound, I think that's very important. [S10: 553-555]

Though technique and music are separated, S10 does talk of using technique in the service of music. S10's use of the word 'combine' shows him to be one of the rare students who talk about music and technique on equal terms, though it also emphasises the notion that they are separate entities, with interpretation coming after the acquisition of the technical means to play. Though his outlook may have something to do with his desire to become a conductor, where, since there is no instrument to operate, a focus on the larger picture of the music becomes a major occupational pursuit, he does speak of wider musical concerns which have been encouraged by his teacher:

S10: I think the imagination side of things comes through the characterisation of music which I think as my [...] playing has developed my teacher has tried much more to get me to play with different characters, you know, to always be trying to think of different colours and sound and you know this year especially after you know we learnt a lot of the technique, now putting pieces together much quicker, you've got more time to be thinking much more about the characterisation, so I think that's one thing that has really been impressed upon me and then I think that the thing that makes each conductor stand out is, you know, you have to have a concept of what the work, you know, it has to be the story or whatever you have to be confident in knowing what that is and I think that's something that I try to. [S10: 500-508]

S10 talks of technique being a means to a musical end and he also talks of the process of acquiring technique as being finite, so that now he has acquired it, he has more time to think about characterisation of the music. Contrasted with S7's overriding concern to be constantly improving his technique and his dismissal of what S10 calls the 'imagination side of things' as something for 'teaching kids' rather than undergraduates, S7 comes across as offering an extreme position on the primary importance of technique for the performer as mediator.

Like S7, S8 too talks about the importance of technique, but offers a clue as to why music or repertoire is not mentioned by more students when talking about his teacher:

S8: Technically he just makes my life easier, I love the way he puts it – he's giving me the toolbox to be able to do anything I like, and he's given that tool box to so many people, so many great people, undisputedly obvious example in that [names well known player], who can do anything he bloomin' likes, he's just, it's just amazing. When I first studied with him, you get that impression with him from stage one, sorting everything out, like there are no holes in the technique. Musically, [he] essentially leaves me to be who I want to be. That's another thing, he has never, ever, ever forced me to do anything that I musically don't want to do. If it's something to do with technique, then bloody hell, he'll let me know about it, he says, he has a way of putting it that makes you feel so bad, he says, 'you have a fundamental technical flaw in your playing' and you stand there going 'bugger!'. But musically, I can just be who I want, and that's why every one of [his] pupils are so different. Essentially, listen to his technical advice, go away and practise and fix it, but others don't, but that's not his fault, that's just the pupil not taking the advice. [S8 308-319]

By emphasising technique, S8's teacher leaves him to be 'who I want to be'. Like S10, S8 also justifies technique in the service of musical freedom, but whilst S10 is happy to say that he has worked on musical ideas with his teacher, S8 thinks this is a bad idea:

S8: I sat in a quartet 6 months ago – I got out the quartet quite quickly – and we were talking about this phrase, and I said why do you want to bulge there like that? It's not written – there's no crescendo or hairpin – what's your justification for it? 'That's what my teacher would do', was the response I got. I was just really upset with that, and I just thought 'but what about you? Your teacher isn't a mirror image of you, they are just helping you to become a better musician, but you're still you, you know, they're helping you to express music through an instrument, that's essentially what a teacher is. That's why they're a [names instrument] teacher, they're not a music teacher, they're not teaching you to be a wonderful, expressive, creative, individual being. Because who can help you do that? Otherwise they'd just be not making you an expressive individual being, because they'd be making you a clone of them. Therefore, not individual.... [S8: 319-327]

This story seems to offer a possible explanation for the avoidance of discussing matters musical in the conservatoire. The story is ultimately about musical authority or who has the right to tell a performer to play one way or another (see also Taruskin, 1995, 173). The student constructs three sources of authority in forming a musical interpretation in his story:

- i) the authority of the composer through the score ('it's not written')
- ii) the authority of the teacher ('that's what my teacher would do')
- iii) the authority of the performer ('wonderful, expressive, creative, individual being')

The student sees the authority of the composer as having more legitimacy than the authority of the teacher and is 'upset' by suggestions to the contrary. But he then appears to 'forget' the authority of the composer because the rest of the extract appeals to the authority of the performer's own musical instincts which are cast as being intrinsic, not taught. What starts out at the beginning of the extract as composer authority slips into the authority of the performer; the two categories of composer and performer have collapsed into one.

The route by which this is achieved is through the idea of authenticity (Taruskin, 1995, 67; Cook, 2000, 6-14). The composer is seen as the original legitimate source of authenticity in interpretation, but the teacher telling the student what to do, followed by the student emulating this interpretation is seen as inauthentic 'cloning'. By contrast, S8 in forming his own interpretation casts himself as authentic, as he draws

on his own creativity. This time, the authenticity in question belongs to the 'wonderful, expressive, creative, individual being' of the performer. By insisting that this authenticity cannot be taught, S8 allows the performer as interpreter to access the idea of the musician as quasi-religious 'creative' being, an important discursive formation in the discourse of classical music.

Though this could offer an explanation as to why talk of technique appears to be silencing talk of the music in my interview texts, it seems that the study of technique is constructed as the only means of achieving an authentically musical end. By contrast, working on interpretation with one's teacher is not constructed as leading towards this. However, S8's explanation is not consistent. Whereas he describes himself on the one hand [S8: 384-387] as a mediator between composer and audience, he describes his flawless technique as only serving to make himself as a performer all the more invisible. He then conflates the boundaries between composer and performer to insist that both are involved in an equally creative endeavour. Does he disguise an unequal relationship, whereby the composer carries ultimate authority whilst the performer interprets within a strictly monitored parameter of accepted interpretations according to 'what the composer intended', monitored by teachers and exams in the conservatoire and critics outside it? Why does there not also exist a position where performers in the conservatoire are encouraged – by their teachers, in perhaps a mode similar to Barnett's (1997) 'critical being' – to forge a unique interpretative pathway, authentic to their own vision as performers?

Interpretation as goal of higher education?

This selective use of different discourses of classical music to elevate the performer's position as interpreter to a par with the composer, involves ignoring the performer's mediator function. Rather than technique being seen as a means to an end to play other people's music and to safeguard the music by giving it an appropriately reverent and competent technical reading, it seems that obsession with technique is constructed as the route to becoming 'musically free'. None of my participants constructed a story that many years of technical work achieves only the ability to play other people's music. Instead, the role of the performer is presented as being a highly

creative one whilst still, unquestioningly, trying to produce as an aim of interpretation ‘what the composer intended’. The performing music student, stuck between rigorous technical studies and reproduction of the composer’s intentions risks becoming unnecessarily limited with very few students realising that this is so because they subscribe to the ‘creative, individual’ discursive formation of the nineteenth century artist. Though performers, positioned as agents of creative interpretation, can occupy a space that is personally authentic, Taruskin opposes this construction, setting out improvisation as a greater marker of a creative musician:

There are now probably hundreds, if not thousands of conservatory-trained pianists in the world whose techniques at trills, octaves, and double notes are the equal of Liszt’s, but hardly a one who can end a concert with an extempore fantasia. Should we call this progress? (2005, vol 3, 288)

That conservatoire training could cause a mutation in the discourse of classical music by searching for expanded ways of encouraging a student to be creative by allowing improvisation alongside the development of personally authentic interpretation is an issue well worth debating. S8’s insistence that any attempts by teachers to engage students with the music results in ‘cloning’ seems to offer a limiting view of what teaching in higher education can accomplish (c.f. Barnett’s ‘criticality’, 1990, 1997), but perhaps a realistic one, given the commitment of the conservatoire to technical mastery and the limiting pedagogy that it entails (Carey, 2004; Gaunt, 2008). My conclusions as to the material effects of these discursive positions are similar to Freeman’s:

These romanticized ideas of the artist’s otherness, of art arising out of inspirational leaps taken by the innately creative, remain common currency in our general (in)comprehension of the creative process. As well as providing a somewhat misleading idea of art making, they fuel the belief that creativity is beyond analysis; that the ways of making art are instinctive rather than reflective, and that its processes should remain shrouded in secrecy. For those studying the Arts this is both problematic and reductive (2006, 92).

Summary

Based on my analysis of participants talking of personal practice, it would seem that conservatoire practices such as specialisation and technique entrench a particular view

of the performer, one informed by the nineteenth century discourse of the work-concept and the canon. Students as performers carve out a position for themselves whereby they must pursue technical perfection to bring about a faithful rendition of canonical works over any critical or creative engagement with the canon, and they place themselves in subservience to a notion of the composer's intentions in their interpretations. Teachers' roles are also limited to advancing technical studies, running the risk of attempting to 'clone' their students if they stray too far into discussion of musical matters.

6.7 Contestation to the discourse of classical music

Thus far in this chapter, the sole challenger to the discourse of classical music in participants' accounts of personal practice in the conservatoire has come from T1, who confirms a discourse of higher education for employability. However, other challengers also came to view, undermining the notion of the idea of the performer as a specialist who focuses on interpretation of canonical works and who is trained intensively through practising technique in isolation from 'the music'. The uniting feature of the texts that I present in this final section is that they challenge the specialist nature of the performer as technically flawless interpreter. Though the texts do not exclusively reference personal practice I have included them here because they form a counterdiscourse to current conservatoire practices that are based on the discourse of classical music that I have outlined thus far in my analysis. The texts can be read as supporting discourses other than the discourse of classical music in a conservatoire education, emphasising non-canonical contemporary music, music outside the classical tradition and the personal development of the student.

New music, personal development, anti-specialism

T2, a percussion teacher talks of scales, a staple of technical studies:

T2: So we have got away from that didactic way of doing it, that very boring way of doing it, where a scale is a succession of notes and have introduced um, more creativity into it, um, so the student can eventually say 'oh, I'm going to play the scale in this way'. And you can say 'have you fulfilled your own brief?' um, and some 20th century

repertoire. And I have encouraged lots of solo repertoire which I think is good quality and develops their musicianship and technique on the instruments, and is written by decent composers, or even half decent composers, and um, and percussion ensemble music and showing what repertoire I think there is, and consequently, I think people have brought in more repertoire and said 'how about this?', so it is a bit like cottage industries, people spring up all over the place, writing an interesting piece. So, it's, what happens on the course is broader, which is, as it should be, so we have had increasingly a broader range of students who encourage each other, and the standard has visibly got, aurally! got higher as people attempt more adventurous pieces and do them better and better. [T2: 264-275]

T2 emphasises the role of new repertoire in his students' study. Though he talks of scales – a key part of technical practice – he talks of them in connection with music, rather than as a means to operate an instrument. Because of T2's willingness to incorporate contemporary repertoire into his teaching, it amounts to a weakening of the notion of canon, leading to a discourse of new music. In the wider context of the interview, T2 tells of how he has side-stepped the more traditional percussionists' repertoire of canonical orchestral excerpts in favour of the new pieces written specifically for percussion based on his own experiences as a student:

T2: the core stuff we were taught at college didn't inform my professional life very much because I decided quite early on that I didn't want to be a percussionist playing in orchestras because it involved not playing most of the time, or a lot of the time. And there, there was lots of other music as well which I thought would be more rewarding to play, so I did lots of solo music, contemporary music and we got percussion ensembles going, so beating, working my own pathway quite early on. [T2: 39-43]

As a performer, T2 works within contemporary music, a circumstance dictated in part by his musical discipline of percussion which accrued a solo and percussion ensemble repertoire only in the twentieth century. Since T2 characterises nineteenth century repertoire as limiting in that the percussionist plays at sporadic episodes in orchestral works, T2's attitudes can be said to be influenced by his instrument's historical development. He makes his case for dropping an exclusive focus on orchestral repertoire favoured by some percussion departments in conservatoires because of its limited scope by comparison to the twentieth century tradition of new music:

T2: So what I've done is try to introduce music written for percussion rather than music where percussion sits on the edge, so it is idiomatic music where you learn more about the instruments and more about how, physically and mentally how the way you need

to address playing, so you learn more about playing than not playing, essentially. So, it involves percussionists or repertoire from the 1930s, which is absolutely critical as Beethoven string quartets. If you want to call it a canon, it is that. That's the wrong word. The varieties of solo repertoire, for instance in the fifties and informal learning, African drumming, in various forms of translation, and all these things relate, it doesn't mean you become an African drummer or a soloist, but it increases your portfolio skills.
[T2: 77-85]

Though T2 also invokes a discourse of employability by referencing 'portfolio skills', he seems to put the repertoire first as a means to gaining these skills, rather than concentrating on skills themselves without mention of the musical subject material. The discourses of classical music are challenged by his rejection of the nineteenth century canonical repertoire; instead of upholding tradition, T2 appeals to music that is educationally and musically interesting for the student, which he also maintains will enhance employment prospects. The authority of the canonical composer has not been maintained and it seems that the student experience as one that is appropriate to higher education is foregrounded, rather than a student position as safeguarding the canon. By putting student learning first, a discourse of personal development for the student is created. One could also speculate that T2 has left the homage to nineteenth century composers behind as he has less to lose by doing so; the lack of a nineteenth century solo percussion tradition to hold on to has made it easier to start anew.

Similarly S14, a brass player on the masters 'Leadership' course, describes how a lack of repertoire outside of the orchestral classical music tradition has made her keener to seek out new music. Describing the classical style as:

S14: Like the typical 'how high, how loud, how fast can I play? how much, how many black dots can I skip through in five minutes?' [S14: 143-144]

she positions the technical focus of her undergraduate studies as a quantitative pursuit devoid of any aesthetic value or interest. Though she initially chose a conservatoire over a university education because she thought she would do more playing [S14: 61], she narrates how she has moved her focus to creating new music for social use (a modern day version of Hindemith's *Gebrauchsmusik*), reflecting this in her choice of masters degree which focuses on community music.

S14 [I] chose to go to music college over universities and got there and realized that everyone really did want to be orchestral musicians and that was what it was all about. And, I wasn't sure whether that was what I wanted to do. I've always wanted to be more in the research side of things. Uh, and, and stuck at it, 'cos I'm really stubborn [...] And did it. And I'm really glad that I did do it. And realized that I don't want to be an orchestral performer because I find it hard to sit in a room on my own, and I need interaction and that's kind of led me to community music. [S14: 63-67 [...] 69-72]

As well as rejecting an automatic assumption on the part of the conservatoire she trained at as an undergraduate, that she should aspire to being an orchestral musician, she rejects the lengthy solitary practice requirements of classical music. She talks about her new musical goals which dispense with notions of the brass player as an orchestral performer, and challenges the role of the performer as mediator between composer and audience:

S14: Um, well, at the moment I really wanna work with different ensemble contexts. So for my performance, that was like an assessment at the end of this year, I was making some music for a quartet of [brass instrument], live electronics, violin and saxophone which doubled up on vibes. And, I was kind of using it as an opportunity to explore sounds and different kind of combinations and just to put loads of different things in there and it ended up being a bit trancy. That was interesting. And, so, to follow that up I, over the next year, I've got like a harpist that I wanna work with and a singer and kind of in a collaborative way, making the material together. (S14: 147-153)

Her emphasis on group collaborative work weakens the idea of the work-concept with composer as master creative genius and sole progenitor of all worthwhile music and also weakens the discourse of specialism prevalent in the conservatoire which holds that performers only play works written by composers. As with T2, her instrument's more familiar use as an orchestral instrument of limited scope can be said to have influenced her decision to move away from classical music. T2 creates a counter-discourse to the discourse of classical music, with a discourse of anti-specialism.

Both S14 and T2 are willing to let go of the standard classical repertory and authority of canonical composers in classical music to focus on new music and new ways of making music, perhaps unwittingly harking back to something of the spirit of the Italian *conservatorii* in their willingness to allow the performer to both interpret and create. They critically evaluate what the nineteenth century tradition means to them, and find it wanting. Instead, they replace it with a personal concern for the musical interest of

the music they play and a sensitivity to the context or purpose of the music, in T2's case, the student's development and in S14's case, the community context of performance. These positions weaken the discourse of classical music in failing to find aesthetic interest in the standard repertory, undermining the authority of a set of canonical composers and redefining the scope of the performer.

6.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at data concerning conservatoire practices of specialism and personal practice. The discourse of classical music is confirmed in the conservatoire by specialisation on the principal study instrument, with its concomitant emphasis on personal practice. Whilst talk of long practice hours serve to underline the commitment of an individual to their teacher and thus solo repertory rather than an employment outcome, the work focused on during practice is predominantly instrumental technique. Technique is positioned as a primary benefit of conservatoire training and also a means to producing flawless renditions of canonical works. Students position technique as a necessary step on the way to realising an interpretation, however, talk of technical studies is much more visible in my interview data than concerns with interpretation, or any kind of discussion on music. I conclude that this confirms that the performer's role is primarily one of guardian of the standard repertory. Any attempts to nurture the performer as an individual voice are limited owing to the emphasis on technical perfection and notions of the authority of the composer which dictate the acceptable boundaries of interpretation.

Though the discourse of classical music was confirmed in the majority of interview texts, contestation of this discourse was found from four other discourses, which I refer to as the discourse of higher education for employability, the discourse of higher education for personal development, the discourse of new music and the discourse of anti-specialism. These challenging discourses often appear intertwined in participant data, for instance, S14 confirmed discourses of both anti-specialism and employment in her interview text. What unites these discourses is their weakening of the discourse of classical music which shapes the conservatoire student as performer/ interpreter for

the sake of safeguarding the canon. It seems that new trends in the conservatoire all serve to weaken this concept of the student created in the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SKILLS IN THE CONSERVATOIRE

7.1 Introduction

After demonstrating in chapter 6 that practices of specialism, personal practice and the acquisition of instrumental technique constructed and confirmed the discourse of classical music in the modern conservatoire, I isolated statements which contested this discourse. The opposing discourses fell into two categories. Those which were derived from contemporary debates on higher education were the discourses of higher education for employability and higher education for personal development. The other two discourses opposed that of classical music by forcing a new conception of the performer as interpreter of canonical works; these were the discourses of new music and anti-specialism. This chapter seeks to develop further descriptions of the discourses derived from and embodied by contemporary debates in higher education.

I will observe how the discourses of higher education for employability and higher education for personal development affect the modern conservatoire and how they contest the discourse of classical music. My analytical focus in chapter 6 was shaped by isolating interview data which related to the practices of specialism and personal practice in the conservatoire. My chief strategy for the selection of data in this chapter is not descriptions of practices, however, but participants' use of a single word: skills. To contextualise my analysis of this word, I draw upon the contemporary debates of the type discussed in my literature review around the purpose of higher education, arts education and the conservatoire. My constructing of discourse categories draws upon academic discussion of curriculum in higher education and the conservatoire, on government literature, sources such as conservatoire handbooks, and on participant interviews in my empirical setting.

I first started focusing on the use of the word skill, the contexts in which it occurred and the concepts to which it gave rise, when looking at the data generated by my pilot interviews. As stated in my methodology chapter, my use and understanding of the word skill seemed to be different from those of students. I had assumed that such a commonly used word which existed in official sources, such as government documents

on education or conservatoire handbooks and seemed to be a term of 'everyday' use, would hold a shared meaning amongst participants. In practice, I noted that when I asked questions about which skills students might need to be a part of the music profession, I received answers that did not make sense to my understanding of the word skill. It is this sense of incongruence between the answers I expected to my questions and the answers I received that now form the basis of this chapter.

Through questioning my own understanding of the word skill, acquired in a vague sense through my role as a teacher, and comparing it to its use in both official sources and my interview data, this opened up methodological questions noted in chapter 4 which led to my change of method from semi-structured interview to narrative interview. However, this observation also opened up a potentially productive avenue of discourse analytical focus, that of taking a word of multiple or ambiguous meaning and exploring which concepts or meanings it was given by different participants and in which contexts it appeared.

Though my search is still for discourse in a Foucauldian sense of looking for utterances or statements which cohere into discursive formations, my search for discourses that are instantiated through the word 'skill' is a strategy that owes more to those influenced by Foucault's discourse analysis than by Foucault himself. In centring my analytical strategy around a single word as a method of ordering and focusing my researcher's gaze, I align myself with the critical tradition of focusing on the productivity of words in organising discourse (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Žižek, 1994). My examination of how the word 'skill' is used is reminiscent of Laclau and Mouffe's view of certain words as 'empty signifiers', that is, a single word that is able to stand for several different meanings. Their own social analysis looks at how words in political contexts such as 'democracy', 'freedom', 'choice', are made to represent many different meanings, in a bid to provide a semblance of stability and system where none exists. As such, these words become key drivers of discourse (Freedon, 2003, 110; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985).

The discourse of skills

In educational literature written in the last decade the term skill has been taken up with varied enthusiasm. It is possible to find discussion of curricula with no mention of the term at all, and conversely it has come to be used so often and in so many different ways that it is now interchangeable with the concept of curriculum. Barnett and Coate, for instance, assert that contemporary discussions of curricula in higher education are chiefly conducted via the use of the word skills (2005, 13).

Those that do not use the word skill, stand out. Biggs, for instance, in his book *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*, has no index entry for skills. Under the heading of 'formulating and clarifying curriculum objectives' Biggs suggests that the 'goal of most teachers would be that their students "understand" what they teach them' (2003, 34). Though Biggs admits that 'understanding' is a problematic term and spends the chapter clarifying what he means by it, he does not use the term skill at all to describe any element of curriculum. His position emphasises that higher education is about learning and understanding a body of subject area knowledge. Much like a discourse of classical music, which emphasises the values of the repertory itself, Bigg's view of higher education emphasises a discourse of disciplinary knowledge specific to each subject, which sits in a wider discourse of subject area knowledge rooted in academia as having intrinsic value, rather than being valued according to its external worth.

Those who are keen to demonstrate there is an external worth to higher education, use the term skill frequently. Discussions of which skills students will acquire through higher education become substituted for the term curriculum. Barnett and Coate see this not as a simple matter of substituting one word for another, but as a key marker of a shift in the positioning of the purpose of higher education. Though Barnett and Coate categorise 'employment related skills' as but one type of skills belonging to only an 'action' domain, the tendency in government-related literature is to promote the acquisition of 'employment related skills' to the central purpose of higher education.

The route by which this is achieved is by investing the word skill with a particular meaning. Rather than being a competency which one learns and practices in a particular context, the skill becomes a different entity in the new 'language of learning outcomes' (ibid, 95). Barnett and Coate explain; 'the forms of development expected of students are to be understood mainly as various forms of skills, as means to ends beyond themselves' (2005, 14). The idea of a skill as a means to an end beyond itself has many different effects. Higher education is seen as the place to acquire a set of skills which can then be taken out into the wider world and used again in different contexts. Lave (1988, 91) writes of learning thus conceived as operating as a 'toolbox', with knowledge accumulated, stored and later retrieved.

The view of a skill as a dislocated, discrete unit conveniently enables educational outcome to be quantified. In the contemporary bureaucratic environment of higher education where 'demonstrable value' is constantly questioned, skills as discrete units form an easier way of measuring 'learning outcomes' than more nebulous concepts of understanding. This view also supports an instrumentalist view of higher education, whereby students go into higher education with the purpose of learning specific and definable skills, which they then exchange with employers after they graduate to gain access to the job market. In turn, this position justifies the expense of higher education; if government funds higher education, graduates will bolster the UK's position in the global economy (Barnett and Coate, 2005, 14). As a government website puts it:

DIUS wants the UK's businesses and citizens to prosper and flourish. We're committed to equipping the workforce with a world class skills base so that the UK can compete in the global market.²⁸

Such positioning offers further rhetorical political advantage; skills that can be acquired through education are also framed as providing social justice:

In December 2006, Lord Leitch published the final report of his independent review into the UK's skills needs. He identified skills as one of the most important drivers of a

²⁸ Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, 2009.
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.dius.gov.uk/policy/skills.html>. Accessed 1.12.10. That this department's most recent name change has replaced the word 'Universities' for 'Business' is also seen as a further indicator of the government's instrumental view of higher education.

successful economy and a just society that offers opportunities for all citizens, regardless of their background.²⁹

Whilst there is a broad consensus that educational outcome is still related to family background (Collini, 2010), it seems that skills, as positioned by Leitch, do not need social advantages, ability or talent to be acquired, and once gained can lead to a meritocratic society.

As well as embodying a practical action, a competency that someone can do, skills also seem to exist in a reified sense, where they are not tied to any specific form of action, but are just seen to be good things ‘in themselves’:

Building upon the foundations of the 2003 and 2005 Skills Strategy white papers, World Class Skills (July 2007) will take this agenda forward, tackling the skills challenge and so that the UK can be a world leader in skills by 2020.³⁰

Without managing to define what a skill actually is, the implication is that the more skills that are held by people, the better. That people can presumably have and freely display their skills in, for instance, shoplifting, bomb making, or invoking social unrest is not taken into account by this statement, however, unless skills are defined, apart from serving a political purpose, the idea of being a ‘world leader in skills’ either does not make sense, or comes across as absurdly replete with possibilities.

Apart from unease over the politicisation of higher education with the term skill used as an instrument in discourses of higher education for employability or social justice, there are strong reservations over whether a skill can actually function as a discrete unit that can be deployed at will in any situation. Lave (1988) and Cameron criticise this view of learning as ‘mechanical and decontextualised’ (2000, 180). Instead, both subscribe to an alternative conception of learning which is rooted to the individual activity, context or culture in which learning takes place.

Dudley-Smith raises questions over the pedagogical processes of teaching; can a skill ever be directly transmitted from a practitioner to a student? He believes that there is a degree of unconscious or tacit knowledge used by every practitioner in carrying out

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*

an action which cannot be openly conveyed to a student (2010, 4). That a skill is portrayed as being easily copied from teacher to student is part of a range of concepts around the word skill which sustain a 'mythologizing of academic learning' (ibid, 1).

For Barnett and Coate, their objection lies with what happens when a particular skill learned as part of the curricula is required in the professional environment; a student cannot simply pick up a skill and then summon it up again at a later date at will, because of the act of recontextualisation which needs to take place (2005, 63). They posit that judgement and a sense of appropriateness are required to be able to carry out a skill in a professional situation even if the same action has been accomplished before. They conclude 'we need to distinguish between skills and their expression' (ibid).

Gaps between the definitions of a skill, its potential uses and limitations in a pedagogical setting, and government accounts of the term, reveal the term as a site of ambiguity and opposition. Its various uses contribute towards political discourses of higher education, such as a discourse of higher education for employability or social justice, or an academia-led view which promotes disciplinary knowledge and understanding for its own sake as *the* purpose (Biggs, 2003) or *a* purpose of higher education (Barnett and Coate, 2005). The latter discourses can be seen to have the effect of attempts on the part of the academy to reclaim autonomy for the institution of higher education from government.

7.2 Categorising skills in the conservatoire

My first port of call in looking for skills in the music curriculum in higher education in official literature is the Music Benchmark Statement (MBS).³¹ Produced by the Quality Assurance Agency, a government quango for higher education, subject benchmark statements:

provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject. They also ... articulate the

³¹ 'Music' in this context refers to any degree with music as a component, be it music performance, musicology, music technology, etc.

attributes and capabilities that those possessing such qualifications should be able to demonstrate.³²

The MBS concerns itself with ‘subject knowledge and understanding’ and ‘subject skills and other skills’, albeit by describing personal qualities as skills:

The study of music in its practical, creative and cultural dimensions develops an unusually wide spectrum of subject-specific, generic and personal skills. Characteristic of the discipline is the integration of general intellectual skills with subject-specific skills, and the cultivation of both verbal and musical forms of thought and communication.³³

Though curriculum elements are described mostly in terms of skills, the MBS does not emphasise a discourse of higher education for employability; in particular, its statement of ‘subject-specific’ and ‘personal skills’ taken in isolation support a discourse of disciplinary knowledge (for instance, in my empirical setting, that of classical music) and a discourse of higher education for personal development equally as well as a discourse of higher education for employability. In fact, employment skills are not explicitly mentioned by the MBS, with only a few references in the document to elements such as financial and business awareness or entrepreneurship that are solely concerned with employment outcomes.³⁴ Refuting Barnett and Coate’s claim that the representation of curriculum as a list of skills enforces a discourse of employability in conflating curriculum content with graduate employment, the MBS manages to conjure up a comprehensive list of skills which leave themselves open to supporting discourses of classical music, higher education for employability and higher education for personal development.

It is of note that the list makes no attempt to suggest how these skills could be gained through the curriculum; the skills are simply listed *as* the curriculum. So whilst a subject-specific skill, such as ‘the ability to read and imaginatively reconstruct the sound of music that has been written in notation’ refers to a capacity that can only be learned and practised through engagement with the degree subject – or Barnett and Coate’s ‘knowledge’ domain – the link between the subject area and the acquisition of

³² <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/honours/music.asp>. Accessed 20.07.10.

³³ Ibid. Section 4.0.1.

³⁴ Ibid. Section 4.2.2.

‘generic and personal’ skills is not made clear.³⁵ The skills are reified by the suggestion that they can be ‘picked up’, though how they are picked up and to what use they can be put is left open.

The undergraduate handbook of my empirical setting also makes no link between skills that are to be learnt and the subject content of the degree. However, it does emphasise a discourse of employability by making no particular division between subject area based skills and employment related skills. By doing so, it implies that the desired outcome of conservatoire attendance is to engage with the music profession, and that subject area based skills and skills needed for employment are one and the same or interchangeable. In the ‘learning outcomes’ section of the BMus programme handbook (2009/10, 5) it states:

Subject Specific/Professional Skills

At the end of the programme the students will be expected to:

- Perform/ compose, technically and artistically, at a level consistent with entry to the music profession, reflected by the minimum pass requirements of the School's Assessment Criteria;
- Engage successfully and with artistic integrity in all relevant practical professional situations;
- Be able to analyse and demonstrate writing tasks relevant to the music profession;
- Identify and interact efficiently and confidently with the employment market, whether musical or not.

The ‘music profession’ is positioned as the goal and arbiter of the standards of the conservatoire and ‘efficient and confident’ interaction with the employment market (whatever that might mean) is granted the status of a subject specific/professional skill in its own right. The handbook marks out the conservatoire as a training ground for professional musicians; there are no subject area based skills that do not have some connection with the music profession. By contrast with the MBS, the list of skills in the

³⁵ Ibid. Section 4.1.1.

conservatoire handbook invoke a discourse of higher education for employability over and above any subject specific content.

Recontextualising subject area based skills as employment related skills

Some instances were found of participants using the term skill to mean a subject area based skill:

T6: You can differentiate there between the technical skills required and the emotional and human aspects of any performance or any interpretation. [T6: 987-988]

T3: I've always tried to be the best musician that I can possibly be, and I do think a lot of the things we do in jazz, and the things I do helps and enhances, you know, just what one would describe as general musicianship skills, playing in ensembles, reading music, listening to music, discussing music, analysing music, instrumental facility. [T3 492-495]

The skills that T6 and T3 list here are all very specific to musical activity, and are similar in expression to the skills listed in the subject area based skill section of the MBS and in their lack of attachment to employment outcomes.

A student also used the term skills in the sense of the subject specific skill. For instance, S11, when talking of her audition experience says:

S11: I think I got one question wrong out of all the questions they asked me because I had worked so hard [...] at making sure that my aural skills were up to scratch. [S11: 235-6, 238]

At first it seems that T11 uses 'keyboard skills' in a subject specific sense (80-81), as in 'playing the piano':

T11: If [my piano teacher] had said '[...] you're a talented pianist it's essential that you gain keyboard skills, because you'll use them for the rest of your life in all of your work, when you are learning sonatas, you'll be able to get to know it from the piano point of view, actually playing it not just reading the music, you'll be able to accompany your students, your whole grasp of music will be enhanced'. Not a bit of it, how stupid! [T11 76, 77-81]

However, he goes on to talk about their impact in a much wider, more generalised sense, as enhancing his 'whole grasp of music', and seeing them as informing his work

as a teacher, thus using the term in all three senses of subject area based, generic, and employment related skills

With respect to finding employment beyond the conservatoire, particularly teaching, students also shared the view that keyboard skills could be transferred from one context to another. For instance, S11 said she felt unready to teach as she did not have enough experience, but when questioned further, mentioned a specific skill that she did not have:

B: Can you see yourself getting to a point where you feel you've had enough experience that you can teach? I mean is that the only thing holding you back?

S11: Yeah, probably, it's probably in my piano skills. It's my piano skills that make me feel under-confident and that is because I just know that I'm like, I don't feel like my piano skills are up to it and that's something that this year I hoped I'd be able to get on board more. [S11: 200-203]

Both T11 and S11 are positioning a skill gained in one context as being transferable to another. They suggest that it is a simple process of transferring piano 'skills' gained through lessons as a conservatoire student to a future teaching scenario where they accompany one of their own students. However, what this simple act of translation does not acknowledge is the process of recontextualisation that takes place in the transition from playing in one context to another. In this instance, further capacities such as the ability to teach, professional conduct and the ability to accompany and listen are assumed to be the same as 'piano skills'. Whilst the ability to play the piano is a necessary prerequisite to piano accompaniment in a teaching scenario, it is not all that is required. By positioning 'piano skills' learnt in the conservatoire as a capacity that is directly transferable to the context of teaching in a professional situation, a discourse of conservatoire education for employability is constructed by emphasising the similarities between the two activities.

However, a teacher on the music therapy course related problems of recontextualisation when talking about students who had come from the undergraduate performance course to the masters music therapy course:

T13: One very frequent thing we do find at the beginning of the course is what I suppose we call deskilling, it's like 'I can't play anymore, I don't know how to play my instrument, I don't feel like a musician any more, I dry up. I used to be able to play, and now I feel I can't', is often quite common early on when they feel that, I suppose the ways in which they've made music in the past don't work, or they are being told 'don't do that, do it this way' and part of the process is then discovering, how can you make music with, for example, someone with a profound disability who maybe makes one sound every 2 or 3 minutes in a half hour session. Can you make music like that? It is stretching the bounds of what you normally think of as music. Um and judging, how much you play. Do you play non-stop, and how do you make space for this one sound? What if you miss it? So how much space do you leave? If you leave too much space, is it still music? Wrestling with those kinds of questions and experience. The training is very much a kind of apprenticeship, fairly early on it is about doing work, observing it or doing it under supervision, plus there's theory and reading and teaching in improvisation and different kinds of musical material you could use. [T13: 224-237]

T13 talks of how the act of recontextualisation required by the change of context is so great that students often feel they 'can't play anymore'. He points to the new context as being so different that it forces a reconceptualisation of music itself and he also calls the training 'a kind of apprenticeship'. He does not talk of learning in terms of specific skills which can be picked up and mixed with others, but rather as a more varied process [235-237].

S9 who wants to pursue music therapy, however, thinks in terms of a toolbox of skills and in doing so uses the strategy of linking subject based skills with specific employment outcomes;

S9: I told [the course leaders in electives] I wanted to do music therapy so I thought they would know more about the course, so they sort of advised me on what sort of skills I might need, so I took keyboard musicianship, interpretation through improvisation, I did jazz workshop and all the things that I felt would be useful for music therapy. I think it depends on how you sort of see the links. [S9: 197-201]

This student also took part in activities that she describes as unpopular with other students and not 'what I would normally do' because she believed she would gain skills that could be put into action in the future:

S9: in the second year, straight away I went into doing [Creating and Communicating Music], which I thought, a lot of people probably thought it was rubbish, but I could see the point in it, because I knew that, maybe because I knew people didn't have this wish to do workshops [...], but I knew I would have to use these skills at one point. And I

thought they were useful. I did percussion which I thought was good, I was like 'this is not what I usually do but I'm up for it, and I am sure I am going to use it next time', which is true [...] [S9: 189-194]

Though it is not clear whether 'next time' means doing a similar activity, for instance, another workshop in the same context, or whether she means using the skills she has learnt now in a future music therapy context, the student believes that by acquiring one set of skills in one context, she will be able to produce them in a different setting. In making such a link, she positions herself as unlike many of her fellow students, but she also suggests that other students do not share her thinking not because they reject the link between skills and employment outcome, but because they do not desire the employment outcome itself. Though beyond the scope of this study, it would be an informative exercise to go back to this student after she starts the music therapy course to see whether her experience chimes more with the description offered by T13. Research of this type could help inform the methods of vocational training by concentrating on issues of recontextualisation which students experience in moving beyond the conservatoire.

Old jobs, new skills?

Teachers found it more difficult to isolate specific skills for jobs. This was not because they did not think such a concept was applicable, but because their experience in the music profession had led them to believe that the skills required to carry out specific jobs were changing or unpredictable. T5 talks of new skills being required in traditional jobs:

T5: So in terms of the more orthodox traditions of classical training, you know, the learning of orchestral repertoire is absolutely central. But outside of that I do think that sort of the portfolio of skills that you need now has changed out of all recognition. I had no expectation when I entered the profession in '86 that I was going to be required to do education work in any form other than one to one teaching or perhaps orchestral sectionals [...]. But now, it's not only, it's not only having those communication skills that I have already mentioned, but it's surviving in a much tougher profession, the profession has shrunk there is no question about that. Competition to get work has become much greater [...]. I.T. is another big area [...]. Probably until I was about 25, I didn't really seriously use a computer, and no one was really expected to, so that whole self promotion and having a website, marketing, all that stuff, again has changed out of all recognition. [T5: 76-90]

T5 locates uncertainty in matching jobs to skills in a competitive job market and in a changing profession. He maintains the premise that students can be prepared for graduate work in the conservatoire by equipping them with skills. The answer is to widen the set of skills, identified by surveying the current employment market and attempting to predict what will be needed. By talking about 'portfolio skills' T5 is invoking the toolbox approach, with the idea that students acquire a range of varied skills that they can then use or combine at will to suit any job situation. In this case, employment related skills (orchestral training), and generic transferable skills such as 'communication skills', and 'I.T. skills' are mentioned, but subject area based skills are not.

T4, however, is more cautious about isolating which skills will be needed for graduate work:

T4: so if you think about it like that, and you think about now training people, as orchestral players, you've got to think already that we don't even know what it's going to be like in 15 years time, and what skills people are going to need. I am not saying that everybody is thinking like that but it is slowly moving. [T4: 290-293]

T4 is echoing Carey's (2004) argument that though conservatoires should cater for vocational training as a central purpose, the institution cannot predict exactly what the employment outcome might be.

T2 makes the case for equipping students with a battery of skills for the additional reason that graduates now go into varied employment outcomes:

T2: whereas the reality is as a portfolio musician as it is called, (I discovered I was one after a few years, when the label was introduced to me), um, being skilled in a number of areas and applying skills to other instruments and other forms of music is where it is at. You can see from the graduates here that only in the last 20, 25 years, there is only one, it may be two now, have got a fulltime job with an orchestra, and that is a reflection on the nature of the employment and what people have gone into. People do all sorts of other things, west end shows, physical theatre, huge mixtures, set up their own companies. They tend to be more adventurous than what the college sends out as the message in its prospectus. [T2: 70-77]

The portfolio musician is cast as needing a portfolio of skills to match, to apply to different instruments and types of music, though again the act of recontextualisation,

or the extent to which skills learnt in the conservatoire can be applied to different musics across instrumental disciplines is assumed. It is of note that though T2 casts the 'fulltime job with an orchestra' perhaps as the stable equivalent of the 9-5 salaried office job and contrasts it with other more eclectic 'mixtures', both T5 and T4 see even the traditional orchestral post as shifting and evolving in terms of identifying the skills that a student will need.

Though students also voiced T4's concern over predicting the future, S6 responded in a different way from the teachers:

S6: [...] Because I can't, I don't really know what the future holds, I can't really limit myself to 'that's what I'll need'. [S6: 259]

Rather than setting about equipping herself with a longer list of subject area based, transferable or employment related skills, she chose her courses according to her current 'personal interest' [S6: 44], citing the idea of the 'well-rounded musician' [S6: 26] rather than with a view to employment beyond the conservatoire. In doing so she avoids invoking the discourse of employability.

Summary

Though skills are talked about by participants in the sense of subject area based skills which enable the musical activity of the knowledge domain of the curriculum, there is a more prevalent tendency for participants to position these subject area based skills as the equivalent of employment related skills, as in the conservatoire handbook. When this link is made, the recontextualisation that must necessarily take place to carry out one set of actions learnt in the conservatoire in a professional context is not acknowledged. One can speculate that an assumption exists that no such recontextualisation takes place, or that it happens naturally and automatically. This enforces a discourse of conservatoire education for employability.

The matching of skills to actual jobs, however, is made more difficult by the positioning of the modern job as dynamic and unpredictable, rather than of known description. For the conservatoire still to act as a place of employment training, a conception of curriculum is constructed which relies predominantly on a toolbox approach to skills,

with skills as discrete, collectible units which can be applied to varied employment outcomes. How these skills are to be gained – whether through student engagement with a subject area or simulating the employment context or work-based learning, for instance – is not mentioned. This too could be a result of the interview process itself; questions about which skills and qualities might be needed by students to be musicians do not necessarily provoke such answers without further prompting.

An alternative effect of seeing jobs as ever dynamic and unpredictable, however, was to move students away from seeing education as an accruing of skills that can be used for future profit. The focus of education instead becomes the knowledge domain itself – in this case classical music - for ‘personal interest’, or in pursuit of the idea of the ‘well-rounded musician’. This in turn presents a counterdiscourse to that of higher education for employability, and is nearer to a discourse of classical music, in that it enforces the idea of conservatoire training to learn a body of music for its intrinsic worth.

7.3 Employment and the transferable skill

Given that participants matched subject area based skills to employment outcomes, what position do transferable skills occupy in the conservatoire? The positioning of subject area based skills as the same as employment related skills implies a degree of transferability, whilst also signalling that the conservatoire is primarily a place of vocational training for the music profession. But the conservatoire handbook already hinted at a further reach of conservatoire vocational training when it referred to graduates’ capacities to ‘interact ... with the employment market, whether musical or not’.

When it comes to transferable skills, the undergraduate student handbook (2009/10, 5) lists many capacities which could be interpreted as generic, personal qualities, rather than the idea of skills as actions, especially points 2 to 5:

Transferable/Key Skills

At the [end] of the programme the students are expected to:

- Communicate effectively in writing and verbally in the English language with different audiences and in different contexts;
- Demonstrate effective personal presentation, organisation and time management;
- Commit to intensive self-demands in order to achieve goals;
- Critically self-evaluate;
- Participate effectively in team work;
- Demonstrate a range of I.T. skills.

However, with student participants, there was a divide in opinion as to the scope and efficacy of their curriculum for preparing them for a varied world of work, including work outside of the music profession. At its most basic there was a view that the decision to train as a performing musician led to just that and had no relevance to any other jobs, music-related, or otherwise. Whilst students could identify with subject area based skills being seamlessly applied to musical employment outcomes, in some cases, the possible use of the transferable skill drew a blank. When asked if there was anything that could be transferred from his performance course to another profession, S7 replied:

S7: I don't think being a musician sets you up for anything else other than being a musician. [S7: 629-630]

Another student, like S11 and T11, by equating subject area based skills with employment related skills considered that learning to be a performer would involve gaining skills that would also be needed to be a teacher, but he was uncertain as to whether performance skills could be transferred to other music related jobs:

S4: Obviously in [...] teaching I think there is transferable skills because you need to have experiences, some experience as a player, or at least to be able to play your instrument to teach it. But I don't know if conservatoire is the right place to um, train orchestral librarians or music management people either [...]. [S4 381-384]

This student goes on to talk about an instance when a lecturer asked a group of fourth year undergraduates to assess whether they were really 'good enough' to be a performer. Recounting how the lecturer advised the students to start thinking now

about other possible career options that they could have in music, the student continues:

S4: So he listed heaps of jobs that you could possibly become that are involved in music but few of them here is the ideal training place for them [...].

[...]

But again, I don't think, even if you want to be a good, someone involved in music, I don't even know if a music degree at a university is going to be right, because there you are just going to be learning analysis and theory, and ethnomusicology, [...] they do open up a couple of doors for some jobs, but there is still no training, like I don't know if we're including jobs like being an accountant for an orchestra. Clearly you need an accounting degree but, are you still involved in music? I don't really know. [S4: 393-395: 407-412]

From his description of conservatoires and universities, he sees the former as places to learn to perform and the latter as places to learn musicology; knowledge and subject area based skills do not automatically equate to a wide range of employment outcomes. Like Dudley-Smith (2010, 4), S4 is not convinced that one can learn anything else other than being apprenticed into these pedagogic activities, which are inextricably linked to their institutional settings, so one studies performance to become a performer, and one studies musicology to become a musicologist. He also raises an interesting question as to what the musical content of a music related job such as a musical accountant might be, thus calling into question the limits of any knowledge or skills learnt in the conservatoire to future work outside of the music profession.

The student participant who had any direct experience of working outside the music profession, in business, before she embarked on her postgraduate degree said the following in answer to the question:

B: are there any transferable skills that you've picked up this year?

S11: what from, to take back into business?

B: yeah

S11: um, no, I mean not really. I think the skills that I had before I came from a working environment, it you know it is a very small company, I mean I might, I'm not sure that

I've really gained much from being here. I think it's probably just the same, I mean I think my selling ability is still, well actually is probably not quite as good because I haven't done it for a year but you know, and my sort of like administration skills and all the things I did, I don't think it really, I can't really see that they correlate at all. [S11: 321-326]

S11 sees no correlation between her jazz studies and her former work, whilst also wondering whether her break from business has resulted in what might be described as 'deskilling'. Her concept of the skill is quite different here from the toolbox approach that sees a skill as transferable and usable across varying contexts at the possessor's will. Here, it is something that is context dependent and furthermore, deteriorates unless actively practised. This conception of skill makes the transferable skill untenable and weakens the discourse of higher education for employability, by either narrowing the scope of the employment available to the musician, or shifting the purpose of conservatoire training back onto engagement with the knowledge domain of music.

In opposition to this scepticism, however, there were instances of teachers and students constructing a particular idea of the transferable skill as a flexible employability enabling entity. S1, a first year student who claims he wants to be a banker whilst pursuing an undergraduate performance BMus course says in answer to the question:

B: do you think there is anything from your cello studies that is transferable [to your future career]?

S1: Yeah. Everything. Apart from the playing the cello side of it. The team work. The leadership, say for quartets and things, the... um... conversational skills, communication skills, time management, organisational skills, the lot. I think that's why businesses like musicians, because they've got the skills they can just mould them around their, sort of, their training. [S1: 24-28]

This student's notion of what could be transferable is commensurate with the handbook statement, namely generic personal capacities. He does not link 'the cello side of it' – the subject area component of the course – as contributing to the gaining of the skills. What also appears is a variation on the concept that a skill can be recalled into action at any future time; here the student talks of having skills which can then be

‘moulded’. Rather than having to be taught new skills, the student is suggesting that the same skills can be adapted to fit a new situation. At the same time as constructing an idea of transferability of skills, he also invokes the limits of transferability by acknowledging the act of recontextualisation which has to take place.

I question the student about his statement ‘businesses like musicians’:

S1: there was a company a few years back, who, the person who ran it just employed musicians who weren't doing music. They'd done a music degree or they were linked to music in some way because he felt they were ... I can't remember the name of the business ... but he just felt that their skills were better than people who, for example, had studied a geography degree or something like that. [S1: 30-33]

S1 manages to subvert the complaint of increasing competition and the difficulty of securing jobs in the music profession which he and other participants mention, by positioning music students as uniquely placed for the employment market – but just not in music. It did not become apparent in the interview why a music student might have better business skills than a geography student, but one effect of the statement – whether the student had reasonable grounds to believe it or not – is to strengthen this particular student's trajectory and narrative as a wannabe banker doing a conservatoire performance course; a narrative is constructed whereby it is not only possible to move into business after doing a music performance degree, but it is indeed preferable to take this path as a conservatoire graduate rather than as a graduate of any other subject at a university. The entity which makes this positioning possible is the transferable skill, which becomes a key discursive formation in the discourse of employability in the conservatoire.

The concept of transferable skills also aided a discourse of employability in the conservatoire with a statement similar to ‘businesses like musicians’ made by a teacher:

T5: when I first got the job I asked [my predecessor], you know, ‘we've got 15 flute players leaving a year, you can't possibly expect to employ them. What was the rationale for that?’ And he said, ‘well in years gone by, people like Marks and Spencer's were very keen on Guildhall graduates, because of all the skills that they acquired like self-discipline, ability to work on your own, ability to work in teams, the whole team dynamic approach, the wanting to work at absolutely the highest quality

possible and having very high standards in everything', so those are the sorts of transferable skills that are really useful . [T5: 183-188]

Like S1's list of useful skills that can be acquired through conservatoire study, the skills which allow a music degree to be transferable are personal qualities rather than subject area based skills. I question further:

B: are we [...] definitely in the business of training people for a vocation in music?

T5: no, I don't think we should be. First of all, all those flute players aren't going to get jobs. And that is about managing their expectations. But we, we've got to try and equip them so that they can do other things instead. [T5: 195-199]

The transferable skill as personal quality becomes a useful tool for the conservatoire in 'managing expectations' of thwarted aspiration. Whilst this may seem to offer hope to conservatoire trained musicians that their degree will give them employment options if they are unable to find work as musicians, it also benefits a conservatoire business model which aims to expand the school to benefit from economies of scale.³⁶ By dint of the transferable skill, the conservatoire does not need to worry about its role in providing an oversupply of trained musicians into the job market. Using the transferable skill in such a way also provides a convenient piece of institutional political manoeuvring; the conservatoire (like other arts and humanities departments and institutions) has a potentially difficult time in justifying its existence purely in terms of graduate employment in music performance as the government requires it to do. Therefore the transferable skill becomes the route whereby the conservatoire can serve many employment outcomes. In terms of students' hopes, it is interesting that part of the remit of the conservatoire – a place that sets itself up as a vocational school for the music profession – becomes to 'manage people's expectations' into thinking about careers outside the music profession.

But what is a transferable skill?

The notion of the transferable skill has a material effect amongst students and teachers in the conservatoire with the capacity to affect students' choices of higher

³⁶ See for instance, the conservatoire's *Strategic and Operational Plan 2005-2010* for economic arguments for expanding the school (2005).

education. Though the transferable skill justifies the statement that conservatoire degrees lead to jobs, there was no consensus between different accounts of how a skill could be acquired and which skills might be transferable.

S1 compares the transferable skills he feels he is learning at a conservatoire compared to those he might have picked up at a university:

B: do you think you're going to get more transferable skills from coming to a music college than from going to a university?

S1: different transferable skills I think. I might get the basis of all the essay writing and the paperwork side of it. But the music side is so much more sociable and people orientated. So that then, after all, you're going to be working with people if you work in the City, so you need to have good people skills. And people who write essays might not get on if they need to be socially adequate. [S1: 253-256]

S1 positions musical activity as being inherently 'sociable', equipping him with 'people skills', whilst his university compatriots engaged in individual essay work are not 'socially adequate'. However, T1, contrary to S1, claims that it is performing musicians who are likely to be the introverts:

T1: Our students tend to be a lot quieter, a lot more introverted, I think a student here is an introvert rather than extravert, so I think that also makes them more willing or likely to be practising 8 hours a day because they internalise. [T1: 460-462]

Later in the interview he comments on how this correlates with their 'people skills':

T1: quite a lot of students here are introverted so the idea of ending up in front of 30 kids doesn't, that doesn't fill them with joy, glee and delight.

[...]

because they're introverted, communicating particularly with large groups they find really tricky.

[T1: 736-738; 757-758]

These disagreements over which subject area based activities could yield 'transferable skills' occurred between different participants in other places too. For instance, whilst S1 dismisses the written work at university as mere 'paperwork', S4 wishes there was more of it:

S4: I also think people need to write more because, [...] there are skills that, [...] to be able to write a letter and things like that and I think you get those skills from doing essays. [S4: 474-476]

S1, T1 and S4 all appeal to the idea of the transferable skill, but it is of note that their anecdotes about specific instances of transferable skills are directly in conflict with each other. The transferable skill seems to exist as a discursive entity which produces material effects in education – not least the belief that it exists and should be gained – but no-one can quite agree on which situation to acquire it in and which skills can be transferred to other contexts. Furthermore, it is possible that conservatoire teachers might not be well placed to advise on the applicability of musical skills to other careers or the success of taking such a path:

B: Another thing I wanted to ask you more about is transferable skills. Have you had a student who's come through, done the degree course, and then decided they didn't want to do music? And has gone off and done something else?

T2: We don't usually find out about that, except by accident. [T2: 385-388]

Despite being a key component of the view of the conservatoire degree as a direct enabling force to enter varied forms of employment, the transferable skill remains an ill defined entity, gaining its discursive force through its vagueness. Because the transferable skill cannot be defined, it cannot be challenged. It gains its effect through the statement of its existence and the concept it embodies, rather than any measurable properties. The transferable skill represents something which cannot be achieved – a full accountability of higher education in terms of the employment market. Therefore, it exists as an expression of what those who press for accountability in higher education would like to be achieved by higher education, but which is actually unattainable.

The majority of students (apart from S1) did not embrace the concept of the transferable skill, preferring instead to cast subject area based skills in terms of employment skills. The concept was more popular with teachers, however, as a way to make the outcomes of a conservatoire education less narrow, and to strengthen the link between the idea of the institution as a place of vocational training and job outcomes. If the conservatoire can be positioned as an institution which enables

students to be employed, no matter what the outcome, then concerns over the efficacy of conservatoire degrees become less prominent. However, this raises the question about what makes the conservatoire different from any other higher education institution, a question which S1 and T5 attempted to answer in their justification of the statement ‘businesses like musicians’.

7.4 Personal attributes as skills

At the outset of this chapter, I stated that my interest in the word skill stemmed from the replies to my pilot interview question ‘what skills or qualities will you need to succeed as a musician/realise your career aspirations?’ I received a great diversity of replies that did not seem to be subject area based skills, transferable skills or employment related skills. Instead the replies I received could be termed in the words of the MBS as ‘personal skills’. This could reveal a methodological problem brought about by my asking about ‘skills and qualities’ in the same sentence without clarifying the difference, and this was something that some students picked up on. For instance;

B: So, what do you think are the three most important qualities or skills that will help you to realise your career aspirations?

S2: Hmm... I don't know. I guess... getting away from it sometimes. I think when you're so focused and so involved with something, you can get so absorbed in something, that everyone here, you're surrounded by musicians, you're surrounded by artists all the time and if you don't take a step back from it and kind of get a reality check so often, you can get lost a bit in this place. [...] it's all kind of little cliques and niches and stuff and I think you can think yourself into thinking about how your career will be here and you may be the best here, but if you're not a very nice person, you're not going to get booked for much. I think taking a step back and being able to be realistic. I don't know whether that's a quality, or whether it's a skill. But at the same time, being focused, you need to be quite focused to ... realise your aspirations. [S2:156-160 [...] 164-165]

Apart from S2's questioning of whether the attributes she talks about are skills or qualities, what is remarkable about her reply is that she does not mention any subject area based, transferable or employment related skills. Her answers can perhaps best be categorised as personal attitudes or attributes, which might constitute a discourse of personal development in that they are concerned with the hard to define development of the student as a person. It is also of note that the attribute which this

student rates the most highly 'getting away from it all', was developed by the student when an accident forced her to take a term off her conservatoire studies (described in; S2 451-480). In other words, the student claims this skill was learnt by *not* being in the conservatoire.

Similarly, S9, the student who related her interest in music therapy very closely to the skills that would enable this career to happen (quoted above, S9 189-194 and 197-201), when asked which qualities or skills she might need to be a musician, like S2, responded with a list of attributes which did not mention either subject area based skills or employment related skills;

S9: Discipline, and organized and open

B: Open?

S9: Yeah.

B: What do you mean by open?

S9: [...] I think mostly open to ideas, open to people and then sort of open, never say no [to accepting gigs], [...] there's also the physical side of being open, just being open to people so that like you, because like I think being in the sort of business that you kind of have to have some sort of like, you have to talk to people and I think it is you can't just be closed and be with your instrument and you have to be sociable and sometimes you might have to be sociable when necessary and you might not feel like it in that point in time but sometimes you just have to make the effort ... And um, just being open to musical ideas because if you're one of those musicians that always says 'no, do it my way!', then no one is going to work with you, and I think that just being open and very accepting and I think makes people more comfortable about being around you because they don't feel judged and they don't feel pressured by your overwhelming presence as a person I think. [S9: 281-297]

Again, like S2, S9's answer focuses on personal qualities or attributes, rather than skills. Though the personal qualities were positioned as being important to success in the music profession, like the transferable skill, there was no agreement amongst students as to which qualities would be decisive:

S11: Outside and in the kind of wider world of people booking you, it has you know to do with professionalism, the way you conduct yourself, [...] It's personability quite a lot of it. Even though having said that, a lot of very successful people aren't very personable, in fact, they are right bastards because they get where they get by

trampling on everyone. But um, that depends on what it is you want to achieve doesn't it? And what I would like to achieve is I would like to be part of a community that wants me to be part of it and not to be part of the game where everyone is like 'oh, that bloody woman' [...]. [S11: 399 407]

S2, S9 and S11 all equate 'being a nice person' with success, however, S11, whilst sure of what she wants to achieve, is not sure whether this is the only route to success.

The role of elements such as personal attributes, or other expressions potentially related to Barnett and Coate's being domain such as 'personality' were positioned as something that students could either passively acquire or actively acquire through their degrees, or even, not be able to acquire at all. For instance, S1 said:

S1: Confidence is the biggest thing. My teacher said this the other day: if you're confident in what you play, the people in the audience will love you and it works to an extent. So I think confidence on a joint par with technical and musicality and below that maybe luck. No, they're all just as important. (S1: 180-189)

The idea that skill on one's instrument is not enough to succeed chimes with Barnett and Coate's critique of an exclusive focus on the knowledge domain and subject-based skills (2005, 63). However, whether the conservatoire can help you to achieve these personal attributes or 'luck' is also not clearly articulated by S1:

B: How do you think music colleges or [this college] could actually give you those attributes or give you practice in them?

S1: I don't know.... Maybe bring in more successful soloists and bigger names from time to time to see what they're like? Maybe people can then think 'hang on a minute, he's not very loud, but how can he become so successful? So he must be extremely lucky, have good contacts, or just be amazing at the cello and was spotted. So at the top of the list, is luck, I think. If you're in the right place at the right time, you're sorted. [S1: 190-196]

The student does not make a link between gaining skills and curriculum, or doing anything other than observing someone else, with the aim of drawing up his own assumptions as to how the visiting musician must have achieved his success. This seems a far cry from the meritocracy of official government skills speak that appeals to the idea of anyone being able to succeed, given they have or acquire enough skills – whatever these may be. By talking about luck, S1 distances himself from that

meritocracy; skills alone are not enough and equally as important is the luck which one must wait for passively to strike.

This is echoed by T11, who also strongly believes that being good at your instrument is not enough. However, for him the key to success is not luck, but arguably something which is not so teachable either:

T11: I am forever saying to [my students] [...], 'when I was your age I could not do what you are doing to save my life', but I may not be an international soloist, but I've [...] given broadcasts on the radio, [...], I've played [...] concertos [...] in front of 10,000 people [...], and not bad thank you very much, so the point is if I can do what I've done starting where I started which was at age 18 I couldn't play the [...] concerto to save my life, [...] you can do anything.' But, it's not really true you know, I say it to them but I know it's not really true because, where you get to in life is nothing to do with your level, it's to do with your character and your personality. Given my character and personality, and my personal history and the forces that were driving me, I could go from where I was at the age of 18 to where I then got to you see, but I know that half of these people, they can play [virtuosi works] right now, but that doesn't mean they won't end up in a [...] section in a good orchestra.... [T11: 184-197]

Though T11 sees instrumental and musical skills as teachable, he sees character and personality as fixed. His conception of education is that subject area based skills can be taught which will be relevant to future employment, but that the biggest indicator of success lies with students' personal qualities such as personality and motivation which cannot be addressed through education.

This lies in direct contrast to T1, who almost veers towards characterising all aspects of personality as skills, and so therefore teachable. In talking about a student who he describes as an introvert, T1 says:

T1: It's interesting talking to the first years, some of them have real issues about going out and socialising, they find that very difficult and one student in particular [...] he would practise all hours rather than going out and having a beer with his friends because that was kind of somehow not what you should be doing anyway, and also it pressed a lot of really awkward buttons for him in terms of his communication skills. [T1: 463-469]

Being an introvert is framed as a deficiency in communication skills, with the implication being that by gaining the right skills, a students' personality can change for the better. However, writing on the modern tendency to view communications skills as

a panacea, Cameron cautions against:

trying to deal with the kinds of unhappiness and conflict that will always be a part of any normal existence, or else, confronting more serious problems which, however, have little to do with the way [people] talk and are unlikely to be cured by a dose of communication training' (2000, 175).

T1 ascribes the institution the role of responsibility for changing a student's outlook on not only career but on life as a whole:

T1: The only way I think we can class ourselves as successful and having done all of our students a benefit is a) to a point whether students are happy and will hopefully have developed skills as well as they can but at the same time given their skills to be able to utilise them and live a happy life and function as a human being in what is a really sophisticated world, which in many ways you know, makes a lot of people unhappy you know, just look at our culture and the way that people avoid reality within our culture through TV or drugs or whatever and you know it's a tricky place [...], our society is not a pleasant place for a human being quite a lot of the time, I don't think we have faced that or prepare our students for it. [T1: 508-515]

T1 constructs a vision of people struggling to cope with an ailing society and uses it as a justification for a discourse of personal development in the conservatoire.

Conservatoire studies should teach students how to find happiness, and how to 'survive' modern society.

T4 also agrees that there should be a greater role for 'life skills', as well as musical ones, and also constructs the potential for 'society not to be a pleasant place for a human being quite a lot of the time' if these 'life skills' are not taught:

T4: Those are life skills. Doing your tax, self promotion, [...] the world of work, the world of business. Jazz musicians have been famously very poor at that side of things. There's been a tradition, it's almost like that's a badge of honour in jazz. As a jazz musician, it's all about your artistry and your art and you have to suffer for your art, so you sit there in your squalid flat, or wherever, sleeping on somebody's floor with the mouldy loaf of bread to eat, and you haven't washed for weeks. There's this group of people that we call the jazz grubbies. Sadly a lot of them have actually died now, but there's a kind of a set of improvising musicians, British musicians who all lived around the Stoke Newington area in squalid conditions, people are like in their 40s, 50s, 60s, who lived their lives entirely like that [...]. They don't promote themselves and they are lucky if they get one gig a month or something. It's all about the art, or the magic of the music.... [...] so that's the classic example of what could happen if you don't

actually look after yourself and think about things other than the music itself. [T9: 557-569]

T4 sees 'life skills' as a way to discourage students from embodying a discourse of the suffering artist.

T1's conception of skills, however, seems more deep rooted than just equipping students with capacities to do things; whereas T11 was happy to teach his instrument, attending to the knowledge domain of the curriculum whilst leaving his students' character as a fixed entity that would predetermine their success, T1 sees it as an institutional mission to change them:

T1: And a lot of people are talking about the sausage system as it used to be in schools and increasingly in how we personalise education and find the skills that people have, enhance those with additional skills, so we kind of get rid of flaws and weaknesses as much as possible, [...] our students come to us with all of those skills bundled up, what we don't do is say 'well, you've got these, but actually you can be hugely successful in this, this, this and this, as society needs those people' [T1: 559-562 [...] 565-567]

Students are cast as already arriving with their skills 'bundled up' and it is the responsibility of the conservatoire to develop them, fixing 'flaws and weaknesses'. The discourse of higher education for personal development is emphasised, and T1 now gives this discourse a societal imperative with his statement of 'society needs these people.' Personal development means not only happiness for the individual student, but also constructs a notion of the individual's debt to society and their obligations as a citizen (c.f. Delanty, 2001, 34). The one domain of the curriculum which is undermined is the knowledge domain:

T1: If you look at [...] what we are educating people to do and what education is for, is moving away from knowledge based, [...], we are moving away from that because if I want to know something I Google it on my phone and we're moving away from that type of society, we are also moving away from the society whereby, actually, we need people in factories because we don't we have mechanisation and we don't need people doing very boring jobs, it's cheaper and we can't compete with China or India in those situations, so I think it's an economic thing we are realising that what we need is creative people. We need people who can look at a situation and create solutions and actually lead companies, that's what our society needs if we are going to remain economically up there and that's where education is going. [T1: 550-558]

T1 constructs a vision of education whereby students are developed as people to serve

the needs of the employment market, which in turn is positioned as being for the good of society. The knowledge domain component of the degree course is considered almost irrelevant, or at any rate, not worth teaching because students can easily gain access to any information they may need (c.f. Harvey, 1994; Archer and Davison, 2008). Biggs's concept of understanding (2003), Barnett's criticality (1990, 1997), or Barnett and Coate's (2005) knowledge domain do not feature here and the discourse of classical music is silenced, or made irrelevant, by those of higher education for employability and personal development.

Summary

Whilst some students did use the word skill to describe aspects of the curriculum, they usually used it in the context of gaining a subject area based skill that could be used in an employment context. If students were asked directly about which skills or qualities they would need to succeed with their career aspirations, they often found this a difficult question to answer. They gave answers that constructed the discourse of personal development in their expression of personal qualities or attitudes, rather than a subject area based or employment related skill. That these personal qualities or attributes could be also described as transferable skills was not really taken up by students, many of whom were sceptical as to the transferability of their conservatoire learning to other contexts, particularly outside the music profession. However, one student used the concept of the transferable skill to justify his decision to enter the conservatoire knowing he did not want to be a musician. This approach was also taken up by teachers, particularly those who saw any type of graduate employment as the key marker of success of a conservatoire degree (c.f. HEFCE, 2000, 21). Faced with uncertain employment prospects entering the music profession, teachers were happy to see any sort of employment as a marker of success of the degree course. In such cases, the concept of the transferable skill was used to discursive effect in making the link between conservatoire learning and varied employment outcomes viable.

7.5 An avoidance of skills in the conservatoire:

In terms of discourse, participants who talked about skills frequently, and who also described students in terms of skills, articulated a strong discourse of employability. They did this by describing conservatoire education as a process of accruing a repository of skills which could then be traded for a job after graduation. For instance, T1, who described students entirely in terms of skills and who saw a diminished role for knowledge in the conservatoire, mentioned the word 'skill' or 'skills' 47 times during his interview, whilst T5, who positioned transferable skills as the means to students being employable in a diverse range of jobs, mentioned it 27 times. In stark contrast, T11, who thought that students' employment outcomes rested on their personalities rather than their performance skills mentioned the word only once and students as a whole did not mention the word often, with over 7 students mentioning it only once or not at all, and S1, the student who wanted to be a banker, mentioning the word 10 times, the maximum for any student, with the next most frequent being S14 at 6.

It was notable that participants who did not mention the word at all, did so even though I had embedded it in a question:

B: how does it work here for students that have maybe come from university and then want to do postgrad, so they'll probably have a different balance of skills [...]?

*T9: yeah, yeah, so far, I haven't got this much experience with the postgrads [...] But up till now, all I've seen is a lecture that I've given them, which has been a nightmare to do, because of the enormous range of the abilities and backgrounds, and different courses, and they kind of lump them all together, but that's all under review, that'll be better. And then they write an essay back and in an astonishing variance in abilities.
[T9: 393-400]*

T9 refers to 'abilities and backgrounds', the words that Lord Leitch had been careful to avoid by his use of the word skills because of their association with politically inconvenient concepts which have a bearing on educational outcomes, such as economic background or a notion of fixed academic ability. Though this association could be dismissed as an arbitrary or unproductive argument over word usage, there was a striking correlation between participants' willingness to see the conservatoire

experience in terms of skill acquisition and their positioning of conservatoire education as being for employability. When participants did not pick up on my use of the word skill at all, it could also be taken as evidence that my wording of questions was not exerting undue influence in my participants' replies.

T9, for instance, who did not mention the word skill at all in her entire interview, said when asked whether degrees should correlate to jobs:

T9: I feel really uncomfortable with this idea of ... I don't know, what do I feel uncomfortable with? It's silly isn't it, I know it's elitist. A lot of good art does not make money. Certainly not in the artists' lifetime. But I think that would shake my whole being, my whole reason of being and my whole understanding of the artistic western world if I thought we were deliberately eliminating that potential genius in someone who wasn't going to earn money but just produced the most outstanding art that this century has seen. And I would hate to think we were wiping that out just so people could earn money. Which they do have to do, but people do find ways of earning money.

[...]

Some composers take both commercial stuff and say 'it's not the real me anyway', a bit like somebody who really, really wanted to be a soloist and an orchestral musician agree to do a musical, 'it's not really me, but I'll do it for the money', so I think a lot of composers do that, or do arranging or orchestrations, things that are bread and butter, but the real me is something that isn't going to make as much money. [T9: 520-527 ... 576-581]

T9 positions an employment goal as secondary to the idea of pursuing artistic goals. As such, she sees life beyond the conservatoire as being somewhat similar to life within it, with both residing primarily in a domain that is concerned with knowledge and subject area based skills. She also invokes a discourse of classical music in her view of the artistic product occupying a more esteemed position than its market place value. Her expression 'the real me' is telling too, as though she is not denying that employment and earning money are necessary, she assigns them a peripheral role.

Similarly, both S7, who does not mention 'skill' at all and S5, who only mentions it once at my prompting, both talk about their aspirations in terms of participation in the act of making music. Though they talk of jobs such as string quartet work and orchestral playing respectively, they do not see these as *employment* goals, but rather as *artistic*

goals. When asked to explain why they believed in their chosen aspirations, they both reply in terms of the discourse of classical music:

S7: And... just playing ... the repertoire is the greatest repertoire. The late Beethoven quartets, um... you know... they are the greatest things that have ever been written. [S7: 111-113]

S5: I think [classical music] has more worth than popular music in a way, because ... someone said to me, what do you think is more important in society. Doctors or musicians? And at first I said 'oh doctors definitely' but then the debate unfolded and I think musicians are really important – especially classical musicians – because they can really lift your spirits and in a way that, I don't know...the power of music, especially classical music is really, has a lot of worth in society. It's the only really pure music, because pop music has words and stuff, but I think it's, you know, it's pure... I don't really know how to explain it. [S5: 471-478]

S5 recruits the arguments of abstract music to make her case and in doing so, makes sure the spirit of Schopenhauer lives on in the modern conservatoire.

Taking these participants' avoidance of the word skill in the context of their articulation of the discourse of classical music at other points in their interviews, I would like to suggest there is a link between a lack of the word skill and the construction of a discourse of classical music in the modern conservatoire. Conversely, the use of the word skill supports the discourses of higher education for employability or personal development in the conservatoire.

7.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have highlighted in my participant data three usages of the word skill, and also a fourth category, its avoidance. These achieve the following work in the conservatoire environment:

- 1) Subject area based skills are seen to be equivalent to employment related skills, thus strengthening the narrative that conservatoire graduates can gain entry to the music profession. The act of recontextualisation that needs to take place between conservatoire and employment contexts is not mentioned or is assumed to not exist. A discourse of higher education for employability, and

more specifically conservatoire education for entry into the music profession is confirmed, as the conservatoire context is positioned as being identical to relevant professional contexts. A discourse of classical music is contested, as external values – that of the employment market – determine graduate success.

- 2) Transferable skills are ways of describing actions or proficiencies which the student learns in the context of the conservatoire and is then able to produce in another context outside the conservatoire. The difference between the employment related skill and the transferable skill is that the outside context is something that does not involve music performance and can include employment outside the music profession. What counts as a transferable skill found no consensus amongst participant accounts, however. I conclude that the transferable skill therefore exists as a discursive force which enables the conservatoire to be positioned as a site of training for a variety of graduate outcomes, not just in the music profession, or in performance. It thus strengthens a discourse of employability in the conservatoire by constructing another way to make conservatoire students employable. Whilst this may lend support to arguments for government funding as it can demonstrate its use according to the external employment market, it also corrodes the argument for the specificity of conservatoire training, as the transferable skills most frequently described as useful seem to be personal qualities rather than anything residing in a music based subject area.
- 3) The category of personal skills, whilst overlapping with the transferable skill, was also used to construct a discourse of higher education for personal development in the conservatoire. Personal skills were seen as benefitting both the individual, an internal motivation, as well as society, an external motivation, and they confirmed a discourse of higher education for personal development in the conservatoire. This contested the discourse of classical music in two ways. Firstly, by putting the student experience at the centre of higher education, the primary view of the student as interpreter was challenged in favour of the student as fulfilled/ useful member of society. Secondly, a discourse of higher education for personal development was also

characterised as a way to prevent the discursive formation of the suffering artist from being embodied by students.

- 4) Where the mention of the word skills was avoided altogether, participants articulated a discourse of classical music, whereby the curriculum stood to inculcate the values, knowledge and actions associated with the music they performed. Though employment and the need to earn money was mentioned, the quality of the work undertaken and the engagement with the music was taken to be the most important factor, and the one which participants defined themselves by.

Implications

This chapter has looked at how the word skill has been used variously in educational and conservatoire literature and in participant accounts to construct, confirm and contest discourse in the conservatoire. The word can be seen as having an ambiguous meaning which acts to cover up difficulties in explaining the exact relationship between conservatoire training and future employment. It both mythologises the teaching process (Dudley Smith, 2010, 1) as involving a simple act of transferring a skill from teacher to pupil, and it also suggests a way of quantifying the educational process when in fact no such simple measure exists.

I argue that use of the concept of skills, particularly transferable skills and personal skills also erodes the curriculum content regarding the knowledge domain, music, as there is no clear link between the skills that are supposedly being taught and the subject area by which students acquire them. By focusing what is taught on a notion of what the employment market or society needs, there is a danger that students are not equipped with the ability to question those needs or to seek out new paths that do not conform to society's established ways (c.f. Barnett, 1997, 143). Will the dogma of the discourse of classical music simply be replaced with the dogma of the discourse of higher education for employability or personal development, and what are the wider implications for conservatoire education as higher education?

The vague conceptions of skill found in my data can also act to lessen the need to look into improving current ways of providing vocational training. For instance, the belief that teaching skills are in part covered by learning to play one's instrument lessens the gulf of context which exists between performance and teaching. As a result, there is less of an imperative to provide improved means of teacher training. There is inevitably a role for training for employment in the conservatoire, but a re-evaluation of how we use the word skills, what we mean by it and how skills can be taught with respect to the subject area of the conservatoire, namely music, could offer a clearer and more productive way forward. At present, the ambiguity of the term works to legitimise the government's instrumental view of higher education and is used by the conservatoire to argue a case for its success in enabling a wide variety of employment outcomes, thus strengthening its case for funding whilst undermining the specificity of its core business; music.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter I summarise my research and present my main findings, bringing the conclusions of chapters 5, 6 and 7 and the discourses constructed in the conservatoire into a comparative discussion. I then exit the research mode to theorise the effects of the differing discourses on the curriculum as a demonstration of how my research findings can be viewed in the context of existing theories on the purpose of higher education, discussed in chapter 2. This discussion also shows the implications of my findings for the modern conservatoire setting. To conclude, I consider the limitations of my approach to this research and suggest potential productive avenues for further inquiry.

I set out to study the modern day conservatoire from an angle that would not use an assumption of what the conservatoire is for as its starting point. The focus of my study, therefore, has been the discourses of purpose that are constructed, confirmed and contested by texts on the conservatoire: texts from historical sources and accounts; interview data; and conservatoire and related higher education literature. I have looked at the conservatoire in its historic context, locating it as part of a discourse of classical music which emerged in the nineteenth century, and also as part of contemporary discourses of purpose in higher education. In doing so, I have sought to find continuities with the discourse of classical music, and have sought to point out challenges to it from modern discourses.

Another strength of this thesis has been to locate music at the heart of the inquiry. A danger of looking at the conservatoire as part of higher education in general, or even narrowing the view to see it as part of performing arts, is that the particularity of studying *music* can be lost. Kingsbury, borrowing from anthropology and ethnomusicology was keen to state that music was the subject of his study of the conservatoire rather than the institution itself (1988, 14), and similarly, the particular history, context and properties of classical music are central to this thesis, with its system of education being seen as embodying its discourse. This approach differs from

other social science research which is concerned with capturing the phenomenological motivations of participants in the present, and as such focuses on individual agency. This means that as well as drawing from the literature on higher education and arts education, I have drawn on a nexus of concepts from musicology and aesthetics. This has affected my sampling too; my data has derived from historical sources, notably entries on 'Conservatoire' and related named institutions in the *Grove* series of encyclopaedias dating from 1878 to the present day, as well as modern sources such as government and conservatoire literature, and interviews with students and teachers at the site of my empirical setting. If such a mixture seems eclectic, it was born of a desire to avoid exclusive focus on either an historical context or a modern context, with the result that I have been able to look at the interplay between past and present in today's conservatoire.

This thesis is an attempt to construct the conservatoire in a particular way and describe it, rather than produce a representation of the conservatoire 'as it is'. In this respect, my account of the conservatoire offered in chapters 5, 6 and 7 differs from my literature review in that I construct my account according to defined analytical strategies directed at a restricted range of data. My literature review, by comparison, is a description of the relevant arguments, not an account of how the arguments are constructed. My particular analytical strategies for each chapter are based on a Foucauldian conception of discourse which sees discourse as the sum total of discursive formations which themselves are made up of statements, that is events or utterances which have meaning and effect in the world through their enunciation or material existence, rather than according to any preformed or latent plan. In order to show a range of discourses which operate in the modern conservatoire, I have chosen different analytical strategies for each chapter, all with the same intent to identify and construct patterns of discourse.

My sources consist of a synthesis of secondary historical accounts of earlier instances of music training and music aesthetics – chosen so as to manageably restrict the scope of the data in this thesis – and primary historical data consisting of the *Grove* series of encyclopaedia entries on 'Conservatoire' and other related institutions. These enabled

me to both construct a history of these institutions and identify a discontinuity in the discourse of music which occurred between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which came into being through a change in music aesthetic thought. I then looked at how the discourse of classical music came to be embodied in conservatoire practices. Key practices, which I identified as producing the idea of the performer, such as specialism, personal practice, technical studies and interpretation, were then used as the basis to examine my participant data in my empirical setting, looking at how participants described these activities, and seeking continuities and discontinuities with the discourses of classical music.

In chapter 7, I used a different analytical strategy to describe the discourses which contested that of classical music. Despite a change of analytical strategy, my focus was still on accounts of what students and teachers say they do in the conservatoire, their justifications and their strategies for constructing their accounts. To analyse participants' talk of the curriculum in a systematic manner, I took participants' use of the word skill and isolated the differing contexts in which it was used, the meanings it held and the discourses it embodied, and also instances where the word was missing from entire interview texts.

Thus having set out my use of varying research data and my different analytical strategies in each chapter, and shown these elements were deployed for the common aim of identifying discourse in the conservatoire, I now present my research findings – the descriptions of the discourse categories I have constructed in this thesis – in a comparative discussion.

8.2 Conservatoire Discourses

Through bringing discourse analytical strategies to bear on my data, I have identified five discourses in the modern conservatoire, that of classical music, new music, anti-specialism, higher education for employability and higher education for personal development.

With my historical account in chapter 5, I demonstrated that the conservatoire was born of the institutionalisation of the discourse of classical music, made up of the discursive formations around art for art's sake, abstract music, the work concept and the canon. Conservatoire practices produce students as performers who interpret works, a mission that Taruskin has called 'reverent curatorship' (2005, vol 2, 650) for its safeguarding of the canon. However, in my empirical setting, instead of focusing attention on interpretation, I found that this conservation impulse had led to participants positioning the acquisition of technique as a priority in their studies. In the majority of cases, participants made no reference to the works they were performing, instead taking the standard repertory works they were playing for granted. The discourse of classical music was embodied by students motivated to practise their technical facility in the service of great music. As such, their learning was directed towards serving the music, confirming 'art for art's sake' rather than anything external to the music, such as graduate employment.

Opposing discourses were found to that of classical music in the discourses of new music, anti-specialism, higher education for employment, and higher education for personal development; all of these discourses could be said to undermine the idea of the performer as interpreter. Out of these, the discourses of new music and anti-specialism can be said to oppose that of classical music by bringing about a new discourse of music. The challenge is brought about internally to the concept of music by contesting aesthetic discursive formations that construct and confirm a discourse of classical music. For instance, new music challenges the concept of the canon (unless it itself is admitted to the canon), whilst the discourse of anti-specialism in allowing the student to be simultaneously a combination of performer/ composer/ improviser/ collaborative artist/ researcher also challenges the discursive formation of the work concept.

The discourses that saw employability and personal development as goals of higher education also formed an opposing force to the discourse of classical music. Studying music performance was seen as a route to something else external to, and outside music. This was achieved by identifying the purpose of conservatoire education as

something that lay beyond the institution, namely getting a job, contributing to the economic wealth of society, or by participants developing generalised, non-music specific aspects of themselves either for their own sake, or to benefit society. When participants invoked the discourse of employability, they focused on the accrual of skills, either related to a specific job in the music profession, or a generalised notion of an unspecified job that might be attainable in the future. Key conceptions of the skill which enabled this positioning were the skill as a reified entity that could be learnt in an educational context and then be summoned up in another context, the 'toolbox' approach, or the skill as a personal quality which would travel with those who possessed it to different contexts.

By contrast, the majority of students and teachers invoked the discourse of classical music when talking about practice and technical studies. Some students who invoked other discourses such as new music, anti-specialism, employability and personal development expressed a dissatisfaction with classical music and said they were not going to pursue it as a career; for instance S2 said she wanted to be a singer-songwriter in pop music and S13 was focusing on improvisation and collaborative composition, despite both of them having pursued undergraduate courses in classical music. Students and teachers who invoked a discourse of classical music when talking about practice and technical studies were also seen to be dismissive of employability as a primary goal e.g. T9, S5, S7. Thus, the expression of different career aspirations also contributed to particular discourses.

These participants who embodied discourses of classical music did not mention the word skill frequently or at all in their interviews; it seems that the acquisition of technique was not conceptualised as the gaining of a skill. By contrast, teachers who invoked a strong discourse of employability did so by frequent reference to the term skill, indeed the belief in the reified concept of the skill appeared to be a key enabling strategy for the discourse of employability. Students seemed to hold a much weaker conception of employability, and when asked to forecast which skills or qualities would be useful to them in their careers, tended to talk about generic personal qualities

rather than subject area based or employment related skills, thus emphasising a discourse of personal development as a primary aim of higher education.

There appeared to be a polarity between a strong expression of the discourse of classical music on the one hand, and the discourse of employability on the other. My analysis revealed that the conservatoire nurtures these opposing strands. On the one hand, it sets itself out as a place of vocational training and an enabler of employment goals. However, its curriculum strengthens the canon and its reproduction in its institutional set up. Participants who expressed either discourse used different language, such as the use or avoidance of the word skill, to describe what they were doing and appeared to rate specific conservatoire activities differently or describe their goals in different ways. For instance, students and teachers who embodied a discourse of classical music created a notion of 'the professional' that had an intrinsic worth. By appealing to tenets of the discourse of classical music, being a professional was about meeting standards set by the notion of 'great' music. Art for art's sake and the intrinsic worth of the canon was held up as a justification for being a professional, and the maintenance of these was seen as the goal. Those who embodied a strong discourse of employability, however, invoked a competing image of the professional. This was one which measured the professional's worth in terms of earning money, an external measure. If employment had been achieved, then this was classed as a success. What one was doing to earn the money was less important than attaining the status of the employed professional.

Inevitably, there were also participants who inhabited middle ground. This was achieved in some instances by positioning subject area based skills as the same as employment related skills (e.g. by T9 and S13 citing piano skills as necessary for teaching), or by locating transferable skills in curriculum activities (e.g. S1, the cellist-would-be-banker). Though the discursive effect of this conception of skill affected people's decisions and created the notion of the conservatoire as a place of vocational training, the efficacy of such training was undermined by questions as to whether a skill learnt in one context could be transferred to another. When the subject area based skill was made to resemble the employment related skill, the act of

recontextualisation required to make the transition from one context to another was ignored. In the case of the transferable skill, though the concept had a material effect, all the descriptions given by participants as examples of its specific use revealed contradictions as to the exact nature and scope of what could be transferable. This leads to the conclusion that the primary use of the transferable skill is as a concept that aids justification of the conservatoire as a place of vocational training. Its use outside of this role is unquantifiable and cannot be transferred to different contexts with any reliability. The transferable skill represents something which cannot be fully accounted for in efficacy or delivery. Paradoxically, its vague meaning serves to hide the unattainability of that which it represents.

8.3 Knowing, Action, Being in the Conservatoire

In this section, I exit the research mode to discuss my findings through a framework which situates my work back into the domain of the relevant professional debates of my literature review. The five discourse categories which I have constructed in the conservatoire, can be said to be represented by Barnett and Coate's (2005, 69-80) curriculum schema first referred to in chapter 2, reproduced in fig. 1, below. Its three domains of knowledge, action and being, applied to the conservatoire setting, give voice to the discourse of classical music, the discourse of higher education for employability and the discourse of higher education for personal development, respectively. The discourses of new music and anti-specialism can fit into this schema too, as discussed later in this section.

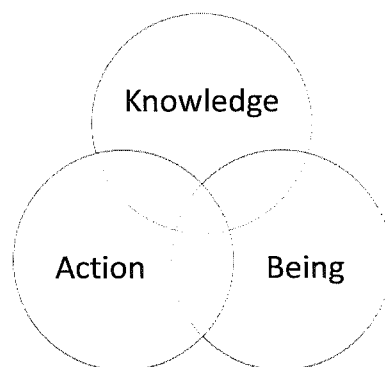


Fig. 1 Barnett and Coate's curriculum model of Knowledge, Action, Being

The form that this schema takes can also be seen as part of the discourse of contemporary higher education. The schema adds to higher education discourse, as well as representing it, by attempting to suggest that discourses of subject area knowledge, employability and personal development can and should be productively combined in higher education, so that a student's engagement with disciplinary knowledge can lead to employment and personal development. In that debates for the purpose of higher education are often conducted along the lines of disciplinary knowledge versus employment, by including 'being' in the schema, Barnett and Coate strengthen and add to the discourse of higher education for personal development (Barnett, 2007), and give a voice to the so called 'student centred' approach to higher education (Biggs, 2003).

I will now discuss my findings in terms of diagrammatic representations of Barnett and Coate's schema of knowledge, action, being, using it as a productive way to theorise the purpose of the conservatoire according to the different discourses found in my empirical setting. Though my discussion is based on my empirical findings, I use the model theoretically, to generate hypotheses on the potential effects of different discourses of purpose in the conservatoire curriculum. From my findings, the discourse of classical music could be said to produce the following weighting of each component:

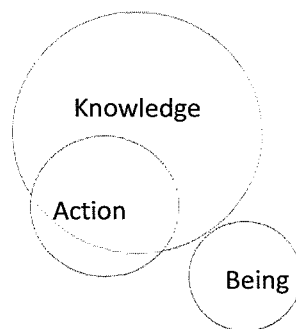


Fig. 2 Curriculum model embodying discourse of classical music

By emphasising a reverent curatorship as the goal of the curriculum, the conservatoire produces students as performers. That this learning is positioned as leading to employment in performance accounts for the overlap between the knowledge and the action domains. That the knowledge domain nearly engulfs the action domain is

explained by my findings that the acquisition of technical facility, part of the action domain, goes towards reproduction of the canon, that is the body of disciplinary knowledge that the conservatoire serves to disseminate. There is very little room for action outside of serving the canon, and if future employment does not involve performance, then there is little that can be carried over from the curriculum once a student has left the conservatoire. That the being domain sits outside of both 'knowledge' and 'action' is indicative of the lack of autonomy granted to the student, caught in between the need to achieve technical perfection and the production of an interpretation of a sanctioned work that accords with 'what the composer intended'.

In contrast, a discourse of employability might be represented thus:

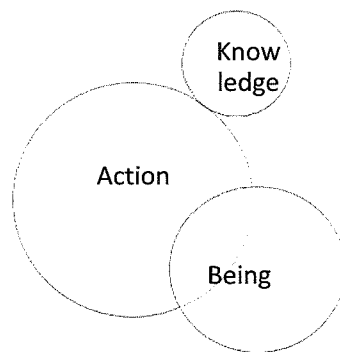


Fig. 3 Curriculum model embodying discourse of employability

By emphasising employment related skills in the curriculum, some of which might be personal qualities expressed as skills (e.g. communication skills), the action and the being domains have the capacity to be integrated. However, it is disciplinary knowledge which is now the outlier. There could be more overlap between knowledge and action domains if the training and the job overlap, for instance an emphasis on orchestral training in the conservatoire and an orchestral job. However, if the skills learnt through training require a high degree of recontextualisation to make them relevant to a job, then the overlap will be minimised. If there is little overlap between the curriculum and the job, for instance, if the job lies outside the music profession, then there is a reliance on positioning transferable skills as the link between the curriculum and the job, thus minimising the specific content of the knowledge domain so that it is peripheral.

The discourse of personal development might produce a curriculum model such as fig. 4:

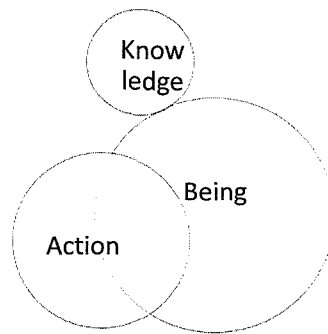


Fig. 4 Curriculum model embodying discourse of personal development

The action domain has the ability to be enhanced and share a significant degree of overlap with the being domain as development of personal qualities such as communication, motivation, discipline are all positioned as positively affecting a person's ability to carry out a job. The knowledge domain is again on the periphery as the goal of education is to lead to a sense of personal development, no matter what is pursued in the curriculum. If the enhancement of personal capabilities is pursued without taking into consideration how they can be developed through the knowledge domain, then the need to study at a particular institution is diminished. Can the same outcome be gained by studying at any other institution, or indeed through any other kind of life experience? Would a gap year suffice just as well? Or perhaps programmes which profess to teach personal qualities without paying due consideration to how those qualities are to be gained risk ineffective outcomes. For instance, if the gaining of autonomy is meant to happen through the principal study which focuses on the acquisition of technique and learning core repertoire within a received parameter of interpretation, then its effectiveness will be diminished.

It is worth noting at this point that both the discourses of employability and personal development, if pursued as the driving purpose of a conservatoire education, produces a model of curriculum which leaves the knowledge domain diminished. This has serious consequences. One is to make the specific disciplinary knowledge as irrelevant to the outcomes of the degree. If this is the case, then the student does not need to

attend a conservatoire to achieve the desired outcomes. If any job in the music profession is the goal, then this lessens the difference of the conservatoire over a university, thus corroding the argument for the conservatoire's special funding. Similarly, if employment outside the music profession is the goal, then the student does not even need to be studying music unless a link can be established between that which a student learns at the conservatoire and the things they might need to do to carry out a given job. The ability to operate a computer might be picked up through writing an essay as part of conservatoire study, but one can equally well argue that it is more efficient to attend a computing course. Similarly, a student may *want* to play the cello for four years before becoming a banker, but there is no compelling reason as to why he should receive special funding to do so, if employability is cited as the sole driver of higher education and the main justification for funding.

So, significant problems emerge when overbearing discourses of classical music, employment and personal development are positioned as the driving force behind the purpose of the conservatoire, producing domains which are unequal and not fully integrated. The discourse of classical music produces the student as interpreter, but has the potential to render conservatoire education irrelevant to the outside world and limiting to the student. By contrast, the discourse of employability produces the student as salary earner. This has the potential to make the music component of the degree irrelevant to the goal of acquisition of skills, as does the discourse of personal development in its sole pursuit of personal qualities.

8.4 Where is the music?

Whilst the models of employability and personal development discourses both have the capacity to sideline the knowledge component of the conservatoire degree, I was struck by the idea that this might also be an outcome of the discourse of classical music. My findings in chapter 6 – that conservatoire students focus on technique rather than music – led me to believe that the knowledge domain of classical music studies might be compromised too. It was the taking-for-granted of the content of the knowledge domain – the music that students were playing – so that it became a

fossilised given, carefully preserved but not questioned, that made me wonder whether it was functioning as a knowledge domain should. This in turn led me to the counterintuitive question of ‘where is the music in the conservatoire?’ If Kingsbury had found that the defining and contestation of music became the subject of his study (1988, 17), I found that overwhelmingly, between the discourses of classical music, employability and personal development, music had become lost in place of the search for technique, employment related skills or personal qualities.

The assertion that in the conservatoire, the knowledge domain, in the form of the canon, at once dictates what goes on, at the same time as being diminished in importance by discourses of classical music, may seem like a paradoxical one.

However, a quote on the webpage of the Leipzig Academy – the institution that Mendelssohn had brought about in the nineteenth century – pointed towards defining the problem more clearly:

Throughout Germany and the rest of the world, the Leipzig Academy of Music and Theatre is regarded as an important torch-bearer of historical tradition. One of the features of a college teaching music and drama is that its ‘material’ almost completely comprises works of art which are open to interpretation. The question of their validity and vitality, and the dialogue between the past, tradition, the present and innovation make up the day-to-day mission from which a college of this type substantiates and justifies its very existence.³⁷

The permission to question the ‘validity and vitality’ of the works inherited through ‘historical tradition’ is granted by this quote. Summoning up Barnett’s idea of criticality (1990) the quote introduces a notion of students being actively encouraged to scrutinise the worth of the material they are learning. This seems to be the missing component of the conservatoire curriculum, not granted at present, which allows the discourse of classical music to both dictate and silence debate on the core classical music curriculum. After seeing potential in this quote for a changed practice, I was less convinced that this conservatoire was different from the majority of others when I saw on the entrance requirements to the Masters programme for string instruments in Leipzig a requirement to play unaccompanied Bach, like so many other conservatoires around the world. I wondered whether a time would come when budding

³⁷ http://www.hmt-leipzig.de/index.php?en_struktur. Accessed 20.11.10.

contemporary music or improvisation specialists could argue against this use of Bach as the ultimate arbiter of standards in string playing by pointing out its historical contingency and offering an audition performance instead more suited to showcasing their uniquely developed talents. Would the conservatoire be willing to question the relevance and authority of Bach to suit the particular repertoire interests of such students? Or would it be a case of 'business as usual', with the acceptance of the canon winning out in favour of its questioning?

So, what might an approach to curriculum look like that did allow for a student's questioning of the classical tradition? For this, I call upon two discourses identified in chapter 6 of this thesis which act as pockets of resistance to the dominant discourse of classical music in the conservatoire, and can be argued to signal a return to the earlier musical practices of the Italian *conservatorii*: the discourses of new music and anti-specialism.

My use of the term 'new music' reflects participants' description of music that is both historical and contemporary, and that allows for a blurring of the boundaries of classical music genres. The main characteristic of a curriculum which embodies the discourse of new music is that it does not preserve canonical works as the default setting. It does not shun them either, but allows for their creative interpretation which lets go of a notion of the composer's intentions. As T2 described (chapter 6, T2 77-85), repertoire is selected foremost to match students' needs or interests, not to strengthen received notions of repertoire which *should* be played.

My use of the term 'anti-specialism' refers to breaking the mould of the performing musician as interpreter encouraged by the conservatoire so that the musician as performer becomes interpreter/ improviser/ composer/ researcher. Here, research is undertaken to develop new ideas and for inspiration, not reverence. Like the Italian *conservatorii*, where the level of general musicianship was much celebrated, improvisation, ear training and composition – taught imaginatively – could contribute to the development of the student. The poles of the specialism/ breadth curriculum debate are also thus avoided as the different roles are designed to feed into the same outcome, namely the creative musician.

The discourses of new music and anti-specialism both challenge the idea of the performer as reverent interpreter. By being more flexible to the type of music that is played, the type of interpretation that is made, and by allowing the performer to take on improvisation and composition, a move from ‘knowledge’ to ‘knowing’, as described in chapter 2 (Unwin, 2009; 17; Barnett and Coate, 2005, 92), is made. As such, the following model in fig. 5 works for both discourses:

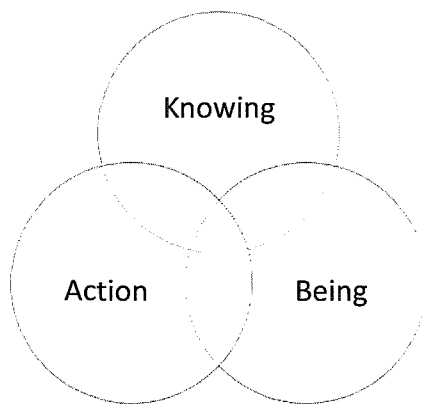


Fig. 5 Curriculum model embodying discourse of new music or anti-specialism

In contrast to the discourse of classical music which is also driven by the knowledge domain, a curriculum which embodies and strengthens the discourses of new music and anti-specialism should allow students to increase their capacity for knowing at the same time as promoting the action and being domains.

By encouraging students to engage directly with music, to create it, experiment with it, bring in their own material, improvise, or interpret according to their own creative impulses rather than the authority of the text or the composer, the knowledge domain is strengthened by supplanting ‘knowledge’ with ‘knowing’, thus bringing together propositional knowledge with procedural knowledge (see Unwin, 2009, 17). As a direct result, the being domain is thus enhanced by giving the student choice and the impetus to develop critical and artistic faculties, but also other qualities such as initiative and motivation as spoon feeding is minimised. ‘Action’ has a prominent place as might be expected in an institution which focuses on practical training, but equally is not privileged over other domains. It is catered for as students are given a greater variety of practical roles and opportunities to develop creative habits as part of the

curriculum (see Tharp, 2003), without letting action for employability drive the knowledge domain.

Though employment is not put to the fore, through integrating the knowledge and action domains, I would argue that such an overhaul of music education could pave the way for a renaissance of classical music and the potential for employment success. Rather than let the marketplace dictate education in the unpredictable field of the arts, why not let conservatoire graduates who have been allowed to develop their creative faculties make new opportunities in the marketplace? As Crichton Miller and Linklater point out in an argument against putting the economic case for the arts first; 'As for audiences, no-one wants to watch a play because of its role in a local economic hub. Audiences want to watch a good play...' (2010, 74). Whilst a conservatoire cannot determine what the marketplace will applaud, it can make conditions conducive to developing students' creativity so that they stand a chance of capturing audiences' attention. By unashamedly putting a more flexible and vibrant approach to music to the fore, a conservatoire could become a place which fostered a creative and challenging approach to music, rather than as a place which tried, however well intentioned, to foster an assortment of ill defined transferable skills, intended for a host of unspecified employment outcomes. By addressing the action and being domains through the knowledge domain, all three become inextricably linked rather than separate entities.

8.5 Limitations

Research is a dynamic enterprise and any research account is an attempt to pin down and set on paper mobile thoughts. The act of writing this thesis has been a process of dialogue between my theoretical and empirical fields, with my changing conceptions of the former having a bearing on the conclusions I drew from the latter. Similarly, the sampling process shapes the available data. Foucault advised 'one must read everything' (Foucault, 1998, 298). However, for the purposes of this thesis, this has not been possible, so I have restricted my sampling of data to provide a manageable quantity of material and to provide material that could be looked at in a systematic way.

Within my empirical setting, I have looked only at texts generated from my interviews with students and teachers, and at the official conservatoire literature in handbooks and the prospectus. The quantity of interviews used is small, too small perhaps to be representative of a larger population in my empirical setting. However, with each interview generating up to 13,000 words, and with my focus being concerned with constructing qualitative theoretical categories based on small amounts of text, to collect significantly more data would have risked becoming inundated with material. Similarly, my historical account relied on secondary historical accounts in chapter 5, using only one source of primary historical data, instead of examining the conservatoire archives that would be the logical focus of a dedicated historical study.

Whilst offering an in-depth study to an under-researched question, the design of my research was not able to address all aspects of conservatoire life and practices. Observation of the conservatoire environment would have also enriched the data available to form my discourse categories. For instance, the conservatoire notice boards offered visual clues as to the official values of the institution as well as the handbooks; one could hypothesise that the celebration of competition wins and orchestral positions gained by alumni, along with the distinct absence of congratulations to students who had won jobs as say, teachers or jobs outside of the music profession, emphasised and added to the discourse of classical music whilst weakening a discourse of employability. Other visual clues seemed to strengthen discourses identified in this thesis too, including the banner promoting the school at the front of the stage in the concert hall. Under the school's logo was listed 'Music, Drama, Opera, Composition'. One could speculate that this strengthens a discourse of classical music by the implication that 'music' in the conservatoire meant abstract instrumental music and interpretation, a move achieved by the othering of 'opera' and 'composition' into different categories listed lower down in the hierarchy. A perusal of the architectural plans for a new building, complete with new symphony size concert hall would also offer a more complete picture to the official discourses being disseminated, as would a combined visual analysis of the pictures and accompanying text of the prospectus.

My focus on the spoken word of participants did not yield descriptions of practices that might be recognisable to course organisers, but instead how participants described, positioned or justified what they did. More specifically, my strategy of constructing a description of the discourse of employability, through texts and specifically the use of the word skill, did not take into account various schemes in place in my empirical setting to promote employment training in situ, for instance, placements in orchestras and schools. However, I would argue that my findings are not invalidated by this omission; given the assumption that my sample of participants were not uniquely barred from either planning or taking part in these activities, they would have been free to draw on these experiences during the interview, as some of them did. Similarly, the silences about these practices can also be seen to offer commentary on their perceived importance by participants.

It is not only the sampling method that has shaped my account, however, but my theoretical approach. The need to show a consistent and systematic analytical strategy has meant that I have restricted the ways in which I have drawn from my interview data, looking out for specific descriptions of specialism, practice, technique, interpretation and also charting the use of the word 'skill'. The requirements of the genre of the PhD, that the workings of each inference be transparently presented has meant that many other potential areas of focus have had to be excluded for reasons of space; the seemingly vast expanse of text which lay ahead of me as a novice PhD student slowly shrunk as writing progressed to resemble the scope of a small pamphlet. Potential fields to mine in my data which I have left unexplored are the discourses generated by participants talking about orchestral studies, the legitimacy of different genres of music in the conservatoire or comparisons between the conservatoire and the university.

A productive approach to my interview data which was precluded by limiting my analytical focus was that of retaining the specificity and richness of the full interview texts. Particularly for participants who articulated discourses which went against the grain of the majority, their full texts offered further commentary on the discourses they articulated, which could not be captured by my analytical strategy. For instance,

S14 a postgraduate who articulated a discourse of employability, new music and anti-specialism despite having done a classical music undergraduate degree made links between her working class upbringing and an expectation that a degree would lead to a job. Similarly, T2 seemed to embrace a discourse of new music because of his instrument's lack of tradition. A narrative approach to presenting the data of my interview texts could help develop and expand the categories of discourse whilst still being open to the specificities of each individual participant, and also generating hypotheses which could be tested through further research.

There were also themes which could have been reasonably expected to have formed part of my main question of purpose in the conservatoire that have not been adequately represented in my data. For instance, participants' attitudes towards teaching, and the purposes and differences between undergraduate and postgraduate studies, could both be explored for the links between the conservatoire and a discourse of employability. Both topics deserve greater consideration within the question of what a conservatoire is for, with teaching skills in particular offering an example of a performance related vocation that can be accomplished specifically by the conservatoire, but is perceived to be inadequately accomplished at present (see Tooley, 1998; Bennet and Hannan, 2008). This lack of data on these topics perhaps points to a limitation of method with regards to the interview process. If something is not seen as a central concern, or is taken for granted, then perhaps participants will not see the need to mention it in an unstructured interview without prompting from the interviewer.

8.6 Further Research

Productive avenues for further research could follow from the work of this thesis. Firstly, following on from my work in chapter 5, musicological research on performers and their training, rather than composers and their works, could offer insights for modern institutions. Such research itself would form an opposing discourse to that of classical music by focusing on performers rather than composers and their works; the conservatoire is not the only institution to create and maintain a discourse of classical

music. A musical culture which supported improvisation could be studied for cultural context to discern the relationship between any educational institution and the performers it produced. The past can be treated as a resource to plunder to reconstruct former conceptions of musicians and the musical contexts in which they worked, providing alternatives to today's models, thus bringing about Judt's vision for change, through looking to tried and tested models from the past rather than radical rupture with the present (2010, 232).

The analytical strategies which I have developed in this thesis can be applied to a range of empirical settings such as other conservatoires. Given the centrality of a discourse of classical music to my empirical setting, it would be of particular interest to study other institutions which perhaps offer pop music, or university courses which have been less focused on the need to provide practical vocational training. Similarly, other arts institutions such as visual arts and dance would offer alternative views of the specific discourses that make up the study of art, with its emphasis on creating new works, and dance, with its capacity for performance and interpretation of pre-composed works. The relative sense of success or crisis in contemporary art or dance and these disciplines' attitudes to works from the past could offer useful comparisons to music.

A further way to develop my work in a practical sense in the conservatoire would be for those in conservatoires – both students and teachers – to use Barnett and Coate's schema of 'knowledge', 'action' and 'being' to look at the conservatoire curriculum, either as a whole, but also to view each individual component of the curriculum. My work can be seen to have made their theoretical schema relevant to the specificities of the conservatoire setting, in going through the potential ramifications of each of the domains and the implications for students. The schema I presented in fig. 5 above for new music and anti-specialism, with its equal emphasis on all three domains of knowledge, action and being may not be applicable to every conservatoire, however, the model can still be useful. For instance, a desire by a particular conservatoire for a greater focus on providing professional training through placements in orchestras or schools may lead to an increased emphasis on the action domain, but the schema can

still be used by the institution and its students to evaluate whether its knowledge and being domains are still integrated, or have become unacceptably sidelined. By using this model, there is no need for an 'either/or' approach to any one domain.

Furthermore, my work in chapter 7 on skills can be developed as a tool of evaluation in the conservatoire context to take a look at the employment related training that it does provide. To what extent are claims that the conservatoire curriculum models various employment situations tenable, and how, if that is what a particular conservatoire aims to do, can they be improved to address the recontextualisation that needs to take place between the conservatoire and the professional environment?

8.7 Final remarks

My thesis has shown how the conservatoire has both maintained and contributed to the formation of discourses on music and higher education. By constructing the conservatoire as an important site for the dissemination of the discourse of classical music, I have also shown how this discourse is being contested by competing contemporary discourses of purpose in higher education such as discourses of employability and personal development, as well as competing discourses of music, such as the discourses of new music and anti-specialism.

With my calls for a renewed emphasis on music in the conservatoire, there is a sense in which I am saying nothing new; that classical music training needs to become more creative, to move away from an obsession with technique is not a revelatory call (see Renshaw, 1986; Taruskin, 1995, 170). What is new, is my argument that one cannot change the conservatoire by working around a curriculum which emphasises a discourse of classical music. Attempts at reform which emphasise contemporary discourses of employability or personal development as the *raison d'être* of a conservatoire education, rather than questioning the music component of music education, risk being ineffectual or eroding the specificity of the conservatoire. The curriculum at the heart of training performers must reform to embrace new music and anti-specialism. Without this reform, the discourses of employability and personal

development will end up as faulty apologists for the conservatoire if used to justify itself to the outside world and to secure continued funding, undermining the potential strengths of the institution whilst short changing its students.

Situating my work within debate on higher education, I am struck how recent commentary on mainstream higher education aims to escape a purely instrumental purpose. Instead, there are calls for a higher education which looks to 'the possibilities of what the student and the tradition might become' (Gibbs, 2000), an end of the 'exile' of 'creative elements' from higher education (Phipps, 2010), and a quest for 'individual voice', 'authenticity', 'spirit', 'inspiration' and 'care' (Barnett, 2007), where the purpose of higher education is to nurture the will, with Barnett quoting Schopenhauer's formulation 'the will is the substance of man' (ibid, 15). Yet the equivalent approach is missing from contemporary conceptions of purpose of the conservatoire – an arts institution where these elements and aims might be expected to thrive. I propose to also borrow from Schopenhauer who saw music as the direct representation of the will, to advocate that an equivalent approach be taken to conservatoire education, so that it can be assured a unique but certain place as a part of an education which is thoroughly musical and truly higher.

APPENDIX: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Research Consent Form

Research Title: What are Conservatoires for?

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research.

I am currently undertaking a doctoral research project to look at the value and purpose of a conservatoire education. This project is funded by Conservatoire X and the Wingate Foundation, and I am enrolled as a doctoral student at the Institute of Education, University of London. I am interested in how students across all years and departments, and teachers view a conservatoire education and your participation will be beneficial to this study.

Participation in this interview is voluntary. You will be provided with a full transcript of the interview and will have the option of making changes to this transcript. Your anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained and no real names or identifying details will be used in any publication of the results of this research.

There is a possibility that I may conduct follow-up interviews in subsequent years. If you are willing to be contacted again, please tick one of the following boxes:

- ☐ I am willing to participate in a follow-up interview
- ☐ I do not wish to participate in a follow-up interview

If you have any questions or would like further information regarding this project, please contact me: bford@ioe.ac.uk

Statement by Participant

DATE:

NAME:

PRINCIPAL STUDY/ DEPARTMENT:

EMAIL:

'PHONE:

I am willing to participate in this research and I understand that the project will be carried out as described above. I realise that I can withdraw from the project at any time and that I do not have to give reasons for withdrawing. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction and have retained a copy of the above.

Signature:

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